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CONVERSATIONS IN EBURY STREET

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN
THE SAME FORMAT

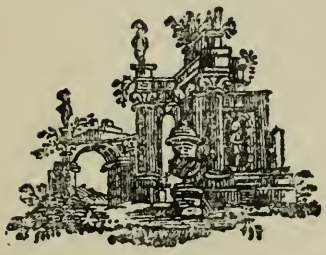
AVOWALS
CELIBATE LIVES
HÉLOÏSE AND ABÉLARD
MEMOIRS OF MY DEAD LIFE
A STORY TELLER'S HOLIDAY (2 *vols.*)
THE BROOK KERITH

By George Moore

CONVERSATIONS IN EBURY STREET

BY

GEORGE MOORE



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ADVERTISEMENT

In the years gone by Catulle Mendès told me one night as we crossed the Place Pigalle that Heine described the Christian Virgin as *la femme au comptoir*. The words appear in French in the German text, he said, it being impossible to translate them ; and interpreting Heine's meaning, he continued : *La femme au comptoir* is the one bright spot in a tavern drab with tweed and broadcloth. And Catulle's sayings lying close to my heart, always ready to be used, it came upon me one day to think that my book, *Conversations in Ebury Street*, needed the bodice and the rose, the rustle of silk, and Mrs. Harley-Caton's petticoats stirring in my imagination, I said : Certainly she shall sit at the desk.

CONVERSATIONS IN EBURY STREET

CHAP. I

A LETTER from an unknown correspondent cozens us strangely, beyond our reason, exciting a curiosity, intellectual or animal, I know not which, only this : that its stimulus is different from any that the mere man or woman could awaken were he or she sitting by us, and the rather if the script be beautiful, for then we are drawn to our writing-tables to tell that our taste inclines to Poe's or Mallarmé's and away from François Coppée's, his having always seemed to us artificial, hieratic, almost a mock of the fourteenth century. But Mr. Husband's letter is no mock, I said. His script is as natural and as beautiful as theirs ; his imposition is perfect—sought for, no doubt, but found easily, it being part of the man's mind : and I returned again and again to his letter, come from the far-famed city of Winnetka, Illinois, for evidence of himself in his choice of words, in the turn of his sentences ; even in his punctuation I sought him, and when the letter slipped from my hand I sat looking into the fire, catching glimpses in my thoughts of a young man, for his letter was certainly a young man's letter. But is he rich or poor ? I asked myself, firm of purpose or likely to be led away ? this last question begetting a scruple lest a casual phrase of mine intimating that a transcription of *The Brook Kerith* on vellum by him would be a beautiful thing in any man's library and later a nation's possession, should beguile him from his own tasks and bring a weighty manuscript to 121, Ebury Street, one which I should not know what to do with, unless, indeed, I presented it to a museum.

I dipped my pen in the ink and sat, pen in hand, a long while, thinking that it were ungracious to tell Mr. Husband

that my letter of the eighth implied no more than a passing admiration of his script. Why passing? I asked, and after trying various adjectives reached out for a telegraph form and wrote: Pay no heed to mine of the eighth. But will not this telegram give undue importance to a remark which he will accept as casual and unimportant if I do not draw his attention to it? and this judgment seeming to me sound, I neither wrote nor telegraphed. At last a letter arrived from Winnetka, which I read eagerly for a reference to the transcription of *The Brook Kerith* on vellum, and finding none I began to think of Mr. Husband as a clever man who would not be misled by a few words possibly out of keeping with the tone of my letter. A man of letters, without doubt, I said, and after some pondering the conviction that he was the author of one book at least, if not of many, set my prose flowing over a sheet of notepaper, a novel seeming more likely than a volume of poems, a volume of lyrics more likely than an epic. A tale of travel in Mexico and Colorado is the book Mr. Husband is likely to send me, I said, but the book that came from him was about a mine; and after turning over some pages telling of the different shifts and the long way a miner has to go before he reaches his seam, I laid the book aside and fell to thinking that the literary sting must be deep in a man who seeks a book five hundred feet under the earth. I read of a hair-breadth escape, but keep small memory of it, or of the letter I wrote thanking Mr. Husband for his book, and no memory at all of the letter which it appears he wrote to me from the coast of Ireland, whither he had gone to hunt German submarines.

Some years went by without news of him, and then a letter came from Jermyn Street, and unable to imagine Mr. Husband in Jermyn Street, I sat like one stunned till my parlourmaid reminded me that the messenger was waiting. No matter from whence he comes, I shall learn why he descended into a coal mine after taking his degree at Harvard, I said, and that my curiosity should be satisfied quickly, I scribbled an

invitation to him to come to see me about tea-time; and at half-past four I was waiting at the window for the arrival of the young stalwart, withdrawing myself, however, from view, when a taxi left the middle of the street and steered straight for my door. I am now, I said, within a few minutes of the knowledge whether his quest in the mine was a literary one, a derivative of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Travels with a Donkey*, or if—— Mr. Husband, sir, said the maid, and in walked Mr. Husband, interrupting my memories of his letters (which were not those of a mere miner), coming forward awed, just as I was the first time I groped my way through the encumbered work-room at Medan and found Zola reading proofs on the sofa, his leg tucked under him. I asked Mr. Husband if he had had a quiet crossing, but no sooner were the words past my lips than I remembered that a rough or quiet crossing were the same to a man who had prowled the Irish coast in winter in an American torpedo boat. As he had not noticed the weather, I turned to his hotel for a subject of conversation, but he had no opinion to offer about London hotels, having only arrived that morning. So his first act was to write to me! and on my inquiring how he had spent his hours in London, he told me that many were spent seeking the church in which Pepys was baptised. It lies behind Mark Lane, he said, and we came round by the British Museum. Ah, I thought the taxi that stopped at my door looked a little tired! But you found the church? and then I learnt that Pepys's bust stands on a bracket and looks down upon the pew in which he and his wife had sat. You have imagined a great many things, Mr. Moore, but I doubt if even you can imagine how much London means to me. All the books I have read, at least three-quarters of them, were about London, or written in London, and now I am in London with a fortnight before me to see as much of it as I can in the time You will show me your pictures, I hope?

We walked round the dining-room and went upstairs to the drawing-room. So this is the Aubusson carpet! he said. At

first the drift of his remark escaped me, but a moment after I remembered that I had introduced the carpet into a book; and having spoken of Manet and Monet, we returned to the dining-room, to talk of my books till Mr. Husband began to feel afraid that he had outstayed his welcome, whereupon I begged him not to think that this was so. He stayed on for another half-hour, talking so well that I forgot the coal mine, and it was not till he stood on my threshold that I remembered it. Mr. Husband, I said, I have often wished to ask you how—it seemed unseemly to put the question in a letter, but face to face there can be no harm in my asking you why you descended five hundred feet to hew coal for ten months. No harm whatever, Mr. Husband replied, and your question is easily answered. I had learnt all I could out of books at Harvard, but they did not seem to bring me nearer to life. If I had lived in Europe, I should very likely have gone to Paris, as you did, but being in America there was nothing else for me to do but go down into a coal mine. An excellent answer this seemed to me to be, and after watching him from my door-step I returned to my study to think the matter out, saying to myself that he could not have given a better answer, for it profits a man but little to have read all the books in the world if he miss life. But he has not missed it and he will find it wherever he goes, to-morrow in Westminster Abbey, the day after in St. Paul's Cathedral and the Tower of London; I hope he won't forget to go to Hampton Court. And not a little curious to know how London struck him, I wrote asking him to dinner.

You have had a week of sight-seeing, I said, and I hope London has not disappointed you. Only in two things, he answered. And what has disappointed you? I was disappointed, he replied, in the Elgin marbles and in Sickert's portrait of you in the Tate Gallery. This strange association of images—the Theseus on one hand and Mr. Sickert's portrait on the other—taking me aback, I was moved to speak of Greek humanism, saying that whereas Assyrian and Baby-

lonian sculpture represented oriental despotism, the Greeks had . . . but before I could bring my commonplace apology to a close, Mr. Husband interrupted : Mr. Sickert's portrait misses you altogether ; if a portrait is not like the sitter, it is not a portrait. The quality of Sickert's painting, I said, occasionally rivals that of Manet, but he is not primarily a portrait painter inasmuch—— A portrait that misses the sitter, Mr. Husband continued, but raising my voice a little I insisted upon being heard : Though Ingres's portraits are often very like his sitters, the absence of what is known in the studios as quality causes us to turn away from them with a feeling of disappointment, but the quality, or shall I say virtue, of Sickert's painting always detains us. I think a portrait ought to be like, Mr. Husband muttered, causing me a moment's annoyance, from which I escaped by changing the subject of our conversation, which was easy to do, for I was anxious to hear the further adventures of this young man, who, having in ten months tasted all there was of life in a mine, started for Texas, leaving the chasing of cows, this second source of life, for a third—a wife. And certain from the knowledge of his character already gotten that he had found and married the desire of his soul and body, I listened to his praises of her for whom he had forfeited his dear vagrancy and settled into a profitable business. Your business gives you time to pursue your literary career ? I inquired, and it was pleasant to hear that he had but one fault to find with his business—it dragged him from his bed at seven in the morning. And nobody enjoys sleep more than I do, said Mr. Husband ; and better than sleep is dozing. To turn over, said I, clasping your dreams to your bosom. My dream is my wife and my children, he answered. An answer that I appreciate, I replied, though I never had a wife. One of the charms of London is that I needn't get out of bed till nine, Mr. Husband muttered, addressing himself to himself rather than to me. And what do you dream when you lie awake in London ? I asked, anxious to learn Mr. Husband as far as was possible in

two visits. I dream, said he, that the next world is as pleasant as this one, and of course, if it be, we need not fear death. Another Paul ! said I to myself, and aloud : O grave, where is thy victory ? O death, where is thy sting ? At which Mr. Husband's face was overspread with such a genial light of cheerfulness that he set my thoughts flowing, and in a trice I was lost in a dream of dewy hillsides and a radiant morning, with a young man blowing a fanfare to his comrades, the meaning of which is : Life is a perfect gift and our duty to enjoy it, for by doing so we help others to enjoy ; and if Mr. Husband had left my thoughts to swarm, an idea of a young man might have fixed itself in me, to flourish in due time.

The reader must not, however, draw from these words the thought that Mr. Husband had outstayed his welcome, nor can he be blamed for not having read himself into my mind, for it were folly to find fault with a guest because he is not a soothsayer, and as Mr. Husband had come to hear me talk literature, it was but natural that he should break the silence with an inquiry about the book I was writing, and impossible for me to do else than abandon my dream of him and turn to *In Single Strictness*, saying that the revised sheets had been returned to the printer and passed for press. A very trite and lack-lustre admission this seemed to me to be, and to enliven it I confessed that whilst writing this new book I seemed to myself to be writing something I had never written before, and for that reason believed it to be as good as any of the books I had offered to the public within the last ten years. And so you took pleasure, Mr. Husband said, in writing this last book. Yes, for the reason I have given and for another reason : I thought it was going to be my last book. But you will always go on writing ? I am afraid I have written too much, and the man who writes many books raises his tombstone. But, I continued, if one does not write and has lost the art of reading and never acquired that of fishing or of gardening, the hours go by on leaden wings. For you life extends in endless perspective beyond your own life, but I have nothing to look

forward to when my library edition is published but a picture gallery (one in the provinces might be given to me to look after), or the learning of French and the senile temptation of writing a book in that language. But the end has not yet come, Mr. Husband, for on opening *Impressions and Opinions* ——One of your best books, Mr. Husband interjected ; I always take it up with pleasure. After reading a few pages, I said, thoughts began to gather in me of another book of essays, one that would not be unworthy to offer to my American readers. And what, asked Mr. Husband, will be the title of your new book ? I answered that I was thinking of calling it *A Parley*, or *Parleys and Opinions*, or perhaps *Conversations in Ebury Street*. And its character ? he inquired. I shall try to make it more like *Avowals*, sets of conversations between me and my friends. But you will not omit the article about Balzac ? Not altogether, I answered ; but the original article begins by comparing *The Human Comedy* to a violet city and a traveller standing on the crest of the hill. I once liked that opening, said Mr. Husband. I doubt if you would like it if you were to read it again, I answered, and fell into meditation, from which he awakened me with the question : had I another opening in my mind ? I replied that I had, a line from Matthew Arnold, but not the fourteenth line of the sonnet—— Beloved, he said, of John Eglinton, one of the stalwarts who still walks daily from Terenure to the National Library determined that, come what may, he will not fail in his duty to see life steadily and to see it whole.

Your memory of my people in *Hail and Farewell* does me proud, I answered, and we debated the phrase beloved of journalists till I began to feel that the evening was passing, and to remove thoughts of the clock on the mantelpiece from my guest's mind, I returned for his sake to Arnold, who, after all, is literature, though he wrote words that have led John Eglinton astray, and with him a whole generation : Two things, he says somewhere, are required for a work of art, the man and the moment ; and if Arnold's words be true and the

moment be necessary, it seems to me not at all unlikely that we have seen the end of the art age, a theory that will be repugnant to one who is afraid of death only for that the next world may be different from the world he has been called upon to live in. You will answer me—— I will venture to suggest, my guest interposed, that the moment Arnold deemed requisite will occur again. According to some there is no death, I replied, but repetition in endless time, and perhaps the moment that called *The Human Comedy* into being may reappear some billions of years hence ; or it may be that the dead do not rise again. Moschus believed in eternal sleep for Bion : The sun brings back the mallows in the garden, and they live again, and spring in another year ; but we, the great and mighty, or wise, when once we have died, in hollow earth we sleep, gone down into silence ; a right long, and endless, and unawakening sleep. A lovely translation from the Greek, beautiful as the mallows themselves, whose beauty concerns us more nearly than the doctrine that everything that has been must of necessity return, return being the law over all things, great and small, stars and mallows alike, everything returning to unity, to spread out again through space and time and again to be collected into unity ; and that for ever and ever. A wonderful dream was Poe's, that there is no death and that we are only separated from ourselves by some billions of years.

From Poe we returned to Balzac, for in Balzac there are all things, even Poe. Balzac was of the old world, for it was not until after the Battle of Waterloo that the old world slipped for ever behind us, and to apprehend the distance we have traversed since then we have only to go to Portsmouth and look at Nelson's battleship, or, if she had been thrown to the ship-breakers, at a picture of her. Her masks and yards will tell us that she is of the kin of the ancient galley ; whereas a Dreadnought—I will not labour the point. But although the external world changes, said Mr. Husband, man remains the same. His instincts are the same, no doubt, I replied, but his

beliefs in good and evil presences are different in every century, and who shall say that with the death of superstition—— But is superstition dead? my guest asked me, and I answered that the superstition that peopled the woods with Sileni and fauns, that gave Neptune to the sea and Zeus to the skies, were a more spiritual influence than our superstitions never to sit down thirteen to dinner, and to be sure to turn round three times when we see two magpies. And on these words we spoke of other things, myself holding forth, as it was my duty to do, since Mr. Husband had come to hear me speak, that the cave man drew before he began to worship, not for his pleasure (so do the scientists spit their gall into our cup), but for some belief that the animal drawn was potentially dead, the inference being that the cave men were identical with modern savages; a false derivation, for one of the most notable of prehistoric drawings is a woman with child, showing that the artist was attracted, like Rembrandt, by the strange form of a woman whilst carrying. I see, said Mr. Husband, that you avoid the word beauty, and I answered him that beauty, like much else in life, cannot be defined. Would you admit, he asked, that the beauty perceived by the cave man and by Rembrandt in the child-burdened woman was a sense of moral beauty? God forbid that I should deny to the cave man the sense of the mystery he lives in and dies in, I answered. Tolstoi would not deny it, said Mr. Husband, and without waiting for my reply he asked me which I preferred, *War and Peace* or *Anna Karenina*. A reply to your question, I said, would lead me far away from the first chapter of my new book; and you know, Mr. Husband, you asked me to tell it to you. Mr. Husband acquiesced.

We must not, however, leave Tolstoi too quickly, I continued; I cannot allow him to be swept aside. I am sorry I interrupted you, Mr. Husband interjected; you were going to say that a great man can only be judged by his best work? No, I was not, for it may be fairly contended that a man's work is all of a piece. Tolstoi was always a moralist, plaguing

himself and the world about God and morality, and in the end discovering himself to be neither Christian nor Pagan, but a man of genius. One regrets to admit it, for we like to think of a genius as a happy man, so full of admiration for the beautiful things of this world that he must reveal them to those who have not eyes to see and ears to hear. The joy of living was Homer's, Theocritus's, and Virgil's inspiration, Shakespeare's, Balzac's, Wagner's ; and if men of genius do not always show a happy face in their portraits, the fault lies with the painters and sculptors. We have, however, a photograph of Tolstoi ; the camera does not lie, and it represents him like a wild beast in a cage, raging against the bars, trying to escape from his animality, which is our better part, becoming unbearable to himself and to his family, at last running away, to die in the waiting-room of a roadside station, flying from himself, for though he had known for a long time that nobody could live with him, the knowledge became clearer to him on the day of his death, and so clear that he had to seek expression in an act. He had to run away, from himself, from his wife, from his children, and worst of all, from all he had taught and preached. As he lay in the roadside railway station he must have felt that it would have been better if he had never been born. I am sorry I spoke of him ; I never will again. Let us talk of something else.

But before we talk of something else, said Mr. Husband, let us speak about his definition of art. You do not share it ? I asked. After consulting all the authorities he decided that art was the means whereby a man communicates his sensations to another. How like Tolstoi, and how disagreeable ! a pretext for poking up somebody to do what he doesn't want to do. We suspect at once that a disagreeable doctrine lies at the root of this definition, but we believe it to be the truth ; it looks like the truth till we examine it. Tolstoi must have turned it over in his mind, and his mind was so shrewd that he could not have failed to see that his definition was a false one, for were it true any man who treads badly upon

another man's toes would be creating a work of art. Turgenev, if he had been asked (and I wish he had been asked for a definition), would have probably answered: The arts are formulae whereby man interprets Nature. I cannot imagine him answering differently; and to develop this definition, to make it plain, he might have added that man being isolated in different communities for several thousand years after the birth of civilisation, was able to invent many formulae. Now and then a seed came from overseas, and in a new soil and in a different climate a new flowerage began. Latin literature is derived from the Greek; it is said that Roman statues were the work of Greek sculptors—which may be true; who shall say? Be this as it may, it is certain that, in the third or the fourth century, art vanished from the earth, some theorists giving as a reason the descent of northern barbarians into Italy, others contending that to have art there must be long periods without art. What concerns us is not the reason for the disappearance of art from the world, but the fact that it did disappear in the third century—not to reappear again for nearly a thousand years.

May not history repeat itself? Mr. Husband asked, and I answered: History repeats itself when the circumstances are the same, and it would have been strange if art had not returned, the circumstance of the thirteenth century not differing very widely from the fourth. A Christian world not differing very widely from a Pagan, Mr. Husband interposed. The mediaeval world was hardly larger than the ancient world, I replied, only portions of the planet being known to men. But to-day we are without Gods, and in a world no bigger than a band-box, with every man looking over the next man's shoulder: A portrait painted in Christiania is indistinguishable from a portrait painted in Lima. The circumstances of the antique world and the modern were, till a hundred years ago, practically the same. We lived till eighteen hundred and fifty in isolated communities; every town had a society, customs, and a dialect of its own. Till

eighteen hundred and fifty many languages were spoken in these islands. I remember the humming of looms in the village street, housewives spinning at cottage doors ; and at the end of a passage in my house in Mayo stands a grandfather-clock which came from Castlebar at the end of the eighteenth century ; the precise date I cannot vouch for, but it is certain that a grandfather-clock has not been made in Castlebar since eighteen hundred and fifty. It was about that time that beer ceased to be made at Moore Hall ; the brew-house still existed in my childhood, but we got our beer from Ballinrobe ; now the beer comes to Ballinrobe from Dublin. Moore Hall was built in seventeen hundred and eighty by Mayo builders and carpenters, and few houses in Ireland or England have withstood a hundred years of wear and neglect better than this hale old house, standing on a hill overlooking some ancient island castles. In my childhood Mayo masons, carpenters, and blacksmiths were little inferior to those who built Moore Hall. I remember one of Mayo's carpenters designing and making a handsome wardrobe ; he could not read or write, but it may be doubted if Mayo's newspaper-reading peasantry could show so excellent a craftsman ; and of this I am sure, that Mayo is a drearier county, for landlords and peasants alike, in the twentieth century than it was in the first half of the nineteenth.

I looked inquiringly across the hearthrug, and afraid lest this big-framed, even-complexioned, blue-eyed, dark-haired, young American who sat in the armchair opposite me, was wearying of a discourse in which he had begun to lose sight of the man he had discovered in certain books and learnt to appreciate, I bethought myself of an anecdote that would restore his confidence in me ; and the day that I had gone to the Metropolitan School of Art, Dublin, in search of Orpen, coming to memory as a charming narrative, I told my visitor of my surprise at finding myself not in a studio with three or four students, or a dozen, or twenty, or thirty (to these numbers I was accustomed), but in a studio numerous as a hive, a hun-

dred or more young men in clerical garb, busy as bees, each bent over lumps of wet clay in which he sought to discover the natural shapes of pears and apples. You must not stir, sir, from the spot where I put you, said the porter, and his advice seeming to me good, I remained like a stock, afraid to advance a step lest I should overturn somebody's modelling stool ; and it was whilst wondering if Ireland had turned from theology to sculpture that I caught sight of Orpen wriggling his way through the serried ranks, his face wearing a smile which told me that he had already guessed the reason of my astonishment. Whence come all these people to learn modelling ? I asked. There must be at least a hundred here. And the money that brings them to Dublin—whence comes it ? Out of the pockets of the Government, who pay them to come, said Orpen. Pay them to come ! And for what reason ? To get diplomas, he replied, which will allow them to teach. So men come here not to study art, but to learn to teach art, I said. The teacher has to be taught ! Yes, he answered ; and it is the same everywhere. But tell me, Orpen, why the students dress like clerics. All come from Christian Brothers' Schools, he answered. But what conception, I said, can the people who invented this system have of art ? You must ask your friend, Mr. T. P. Gill, about that, Orpen replied ; and I heard that a Metropolitan School of Art had been set up in every large town, for according to the newest democracy everybody must get his chance, whether he wants it or not. To admit, Orpen continued, that one man brings a gift into the world and that the next man does not, would amount to an admission that the Liberal party cannot rectify Nature's mistakes. And what would become of the constituencies if such a thing were admitted ? I am amazed, I said, for I did not suspect imbecility in the average man. The average man is not originally imbecile, said Orpen, but if he have not genius he cannot react against a system ; and so enslaved is he in it that he no longer believes in anything except what is taught in the schools. The contention of the Minister of Education

would be that it is his business to look after mediocrity. He might even say : Let us create mediocrity.

Wonderful ! thrice wonderful ! I replied, and began a story that I had from my friend Tonks, the Slade professor, of how an artist was treated by Mr. Fisher or his department. The man was an artist ; he had gained his living by painting ; but after the War he fell into difficult circumstances, and applied for the post of teacher at a provincial school ; mind you, he was an artist who had gained his living by painting. The headmaster of the school at which he wished to teach had seen his paintings in many various exhibitions, and the artist thought that all was settled ; but when he interviewed Mr. Fisher, or his department, I know not which, he was told : Yes, your pictures are well enough—we have photographs of them before us—but you must go to Kensington and pass through a course of pedagogy. Pedagogy—what is that ? I asked ; I have never heard the word. Tonks explained it to me, and I answered : Well, then, if a school were started to teach young ladies to write novels, and I applied for the post, I should have to learn how I was to teach them to write novels ? Most undoubtedly you would ! So that is the Fisher formula, Tonks. Mr. Fisher, Tonks continued, will admit that his system is not perfect ; he hopes to improve it. But he has critics, I said, and these will dare to say that we are pursuing a false system of teaching ; but nobody will admit that all teaching is futile, worse than futile, poisonous, and that the poison will continue generation after generation until there is neither handicraft nor art worth speaking of left in England.

It would seem, Mr. Husband, that every epoch is represented by a word : the thirteenth century by filioque, the Napoleonic empire by organisation, the twentieth century by education, and to bring about a renaissance of illiteracy, upon my word I would welcome a reawakening of theology. The arts flourished in theology, and, if certain questions were not asked, men and women were left to their instincts. You think, said

my guest, that man has not advanced in intelligence ? You do not think he has, Mr. Husband, nor does anybody but those without knowledge of the world's history—the history of Greece, for example. Mr. Fisher knows that forcible education was not the law of Athens and that wisdom throve without it, and if he believes in detaining young folk at school till they are sixteen, and brings down Wranglers from Cambridge and Firsts from Oxford to teach them, it is because he does not know how life is made, or that his belief in forcible education springs from money—money hides from learned men many things that the poor know well, and every workman is aware that a boy released from school when he is fourteen is set upon learning a trade, but if he be kept at school till he is sixteen he very likely becomes part of the vagrant class. At sixteen a boy begins to look round, to think, and seeing that there is no future for him in ploughing, mowing, carting hay, reaping corn, or following a flock, he hesitates to return whence he came. If he be a town lad the plumbing trade does not entice him, the slater's still less, for sewers are deep and roofs are high ; and if you press him, saying : Well, if you don't enter a trade how do you hope to get a living ? Live on the old man, I expect, is the answer you will get. The new system allows boys to be kept at school till they are sixteen, and it permits exceptional boys to be detained till they are eighteen—the exceptional boy, in the eyes of the schoolmaster, being the boy who passes examinations. At one moment of my life I remember being able to count twenty men among my friends and acquaintances who had taken Firsts at Oxford, and looking back upon them now they seem to have been a very sorry squad indeed. Some lived upon their relations ; some had small incomes, from two hundred and fifty to three hundred pounds a year, and struggled to make two ends meet in furnished apartments ; some turned to journalism and wrote paragraphs and turn-overs for the *Globe* newspaper ; some drifted into the *Times* office, others into chambers in the Temple, glad to accept what are known as

soups at the Old Bailey. I don't remember these old friends as stupid, rather as worn-out men.

Education, said Mr. Husband, must come from within, not from without, and all that is of value is self-education. It is a pity that I did not listen longer, but the impulse of speech was upon me and I continued the conversation in these terms: Our concern is not with the men who go to Universities to wear their brains away learning things they do not want to learn for the sake of their parents, who would like to say: Johnny took a First. Oxford has produced some mental wrecks, men who lacked grit to resist education as resolutely as I did; but my pity is for those in the elementary school, who are turned from their natural instincts. The making of round pegs for square holes, Mr. Husband chimed in, and I answered: Yet it should be clear to everybody who gives five minutes' thought to the question that the destiny of the great majority of mankind is to dig the field. An everlasting law that no Government can change, said Mr. Husband, and I replied: The country goes to the town, but the town never returns to the country, and those that do are the jeering-stocks of the peasants. A few months ago a land-girl wrote to a daily paper that she found the scaring of rooks tedious, but was consoled by the thought that the winter's day is short and that she would return at four o'clock to tea and crumpets, to an evening of dancing and music in a comfortable cottage, a letter which set me thinking of the Court of Louis XVI leaving Versailles at undern for the Petit Trianon to milk cows. I often wonder if Mr. Fisher, on awakening from his educational dreams, asks himself how the world will get its food when the shepherd no longer goes to the fold, lantern in hand, and the ploughman to the stable. It will not surprise me, said Mr. Husband, if I live to see Europe without vegetables. Beef and corn you may get from abroad, but there will be no asparagus. I laughed at this sally, and continued: It is hard to think that Mr. Fisher ponders his educational schemes without sometimes seeing the peasant as Atlas, and the

explanation that he is a Londoner, born and bred, and has never leaned over the stilts, is not enough, for on his holidays he cannot have escaped seeing a man hedging and ditching ; but very learned men often have eyes only for print and are unable to appreciate the country until they read of it in books, and it may be that Mr. Fisher is one of these. If he understands what he reads in print, all will be well, said Mr. Husband, for I can see that you are bent on enlightening him. I was moved to reprove Mr. Husband for his facetiousness, but remembering that he was my guest, I said : Though there be no hedging and ditching in America, Mr. Husband, there are certainly coal mines, and you are perhaps the one educated man in the world who has hewn coal of his own free will. So tell me, you who know something of manual labour at first hand—no, I am not punning—tell me if education and manual work are compatible. Mr. Winston Churchill told yesterday in a great speech, said Mr. Husband, how Bolshevism had reduced Russia to a desert where millions are dying of starvation ; and millions will die here, if Bolshevism gets a footing in England—his very words. And whilst Mr. Churchill spoke at his meeting, Mr. Fisher was vowing at his that he would keep boys at school till they were sixteen, and those that passed certain examinations till they were eighteen, without it occurring to him that he is—how shall I put it ?—making the bed for Lenin.

I was about to start again on the words : The law that is over us, when my guest interrupted, and I listened, nothing loth, having already had my fill of words. It may be well for you to hear, said Mr. Husband—I hope you don't mind ? On the contrary, I replied ; you can illuminate the question whether forced education—— I was going to say, began Mr. Husband, and then stopped suddenly, as if ashamed at having interrupted me. I waited. I was going to say, he repeated, that Aristotle thought it quite natural for men to be born slaves. I have not read Aristotle, I answered, but am willing to believe that a wisdom which has illuminated century after

century is looked upon to-day with contempt—out of keeping with the twentieth century. Progress ! I continued, looking into Mr. Husband's face. A book might be written indeed about the progress we have made. But however well written the book would fail to open the eyes of the blind century we live in ; and I spoke of Brown, Jones, and Robinson, whose conception of the word slavery is a nigger woman crossing a frozen river with a baby in her arms, jumping from floe to floe, or a nigger being tracked by bloodhounds or tied to a tree and whipped for disobedience. Of course the destiny of the vast majority of men is to dig the field ; Nature intended Brown, Jones, and Robinson to dig, and the Minister of Education cannot alter Nature's decree. We have Aristotle on our side and even the Bible : Man shall get his living by the sweat of his brow. How stupid it all is, how stupid ! for slavery, in Aristotle's conception of the word, meant that some men are born to manual work, others to intellectual, and he might have added that men are only happy when they are accomplishing the work that Nature has assigned to them. The worst slavery of all is to be set to perform tasks that are out of our instinct. A hare beating a tambourine in Regent Street is one of the most pathetic of all spectacles. I saw one once, and introduced poor puss—— Into *Evelyn Innes*, said Mr. Husband. Yes ; and now I compare the showman to the Minister of Education, who is daily dragging men and women out of their instincts, out of their nature, out of their genius, creating the worst slavery of all, unsuspicious that the Liberal professions cannot absorb everybody. And so it has come to pass that the men whom Nature designed for shepherds are curing the sick, and that those in whom Nature implanted the instinct of the office stool are painting pictures. All humanity suffers, and the greatest sufferer is the poor girl who dreams of her lost happiness in the kitchen whilst measuring heads in the Westminster School of Art.

After a pause, during which Mr. Husband was kind enough to wait for me to collect my thoughts, I said : We have

forsworn our hands and invented machines that do badly what the hand did well; and having got so far, we would, by means of enforced education, wipe out original instincts and remake mankind, for it amounts to as much. Everybody in the Education Office knows that he cannot educate himself, but he is convinced that he can educate somebody else. A well-meaning race is the race of man, but incurably stupid, and going from bad to worse. You spoke of Aristotle just now; I wonder what he would think of the modern belief that everybody is a slave who does not go to an office and sit on a high stool and keep accounts, and go to the sea-side with his wife for a fortnight's holiday. I think I can see Aristotle in my thoughts looking at the office stool, and after looking at it for some time his words sound in my ears: But men are shaped differently; do you not keep different sizes? I think I can hear Mr. Fisher answer: At present the size does not fit every bum, but we hope that the bums will soon begin to fit the stool. A Platonist, surely, Aristotle murmurs; I always dreaded his influence, and now find it predominant after more than two thousand years. How very extraordinary! And then Aristotle might ask: Enforced education, or enforced slavery—which? Why is one meritorious and the other abominable? There are many among the young generation, said Mr. Husband, who dislike, and intensely, the education that is being forced upon them, who, as you would say, Mr. Moore, are inspired by their instincts to avoid it, and would prefer to educate themselves, feeling that they could do it better. But their parents will not hear of anything but Eton or Harrow, I interjected, and after that the boys must go to Oxford or Cambridge, for the parents who have achieved fortunes argue in this way: We were hindered for many years by lack of education; our children shall begin where we ended. How pathetic are human hopes and beliefs, and none of us is free from these. My first publisher—no, not my first, my second, Walter Scott, began life as a mason; he worked on the scaffold and helped to build the railway station at New-

castle. But he did not remain long a mason; he soon became a rich man, a great contractor, who would have undertaken a tunnel under Hyde Park as part of the day's work. But how did he become a publisher? asked Mr. Husband. Some bad debt, I answered, and he thought it might amuse his children; they had been to Oxford or Cambridge and knew more about literature than he did. He ran his publishing business like a grouse moor, as a pleasure; sometimes it paid, and sometimes it didn't, and when it didn't he wiped off the debts. At the end of his life he went to Egypt, interested in the building of the Pyramids. A big undertaking no doubt it was, he said to me, but one that I would undertake myself; what I would not undertake, however, are the tombs carved out of the rock. But with our modern appliances, surely, carving a tomb out of rock presents fewer difficulties to-day than it did three thousand years ago? No doubt, no doubt, he answered, but the tombs I saw were painted, and they were as fresh as if they'd been done yesterday; and unless the Egyptians had electric light, I don't know how it was done. And the sons who were educated at Oxford or Cambridge? asked Mr. Husband. I answered that I had never seen them, but believed they were just like other English gentlemen.

Tell me, I continued, changing the subject suddenly, passing from philosophy to practical truths, is it true that in America all manual work is done by emigrants? I believe the servant problem is a very pressing one? Our servants come from Ireland, Italy, and Sweden, Mr. Husband replied, and that is why the emigration laws are not more strict; at least seventy per cent. of our manual labour comes from the middle of Europe. The first generation works hard, the second generation works less, the third generation looks upon itself as America and aspires to the Liberal professions, which, as you have said, cannot absorb everybody. I asked him if he had met no Americans hewing coal. About five-and-twenty per cent. in the mine in which I worked were Americans, he answered; and he spoke of some lean hunters

who came sometimes from the Blue Ridge Mountains of Maryland. Who, he said, when not hunting or mining are employed in feuds, vendettas, the causes of which are forgotten, so long ago is it since the original shooting. Dick knows that he must shoot Jim when he meets him, and Jim is not more knowledgeable ; enough it is for him to know that he must pull the trigger first. My attention was held by some fine stories of the outlaws of the Blue Ridge Mountains and the women that favoured them—how the mistress of a defiant and resolute robber brought food to her lover's cave month after month undetected, and would have succeeded in helping him to escape from justice if the man had not needed for his flight a pair of boots ; it was the purchase of a size either larger or smaller than her husband's that directed the suspicions of the police. She was followed, and the robber captured, but I have forgotten whether he escaped hanging.

But I am wandering from memories of my delightful guest (is not every memory intermittent ?), and what I remember next of the evening's conversation is Mr. Husband telling me many stories of the childishness and improvidence of the negroes he had met in the mine. I remember a negro, he said, going to a store with his week's earnings and paying two guineas for a pair of patent leather boots. He wore them on Sunday, and on Monday went down into the mine in them ; on Wednesday they were no longer wearable. Not only are the negroes improvident, but they have no exact idea as to the value of money. A negro and his wife look after my offices ; I pay him a hundred dollars a month, and he never has a cent by the time his next wages become due. Boss, said he once, I go buy motor-car. But, I answered, where will you keep it ? You can't keep it in the office. No, no; but build garridge. Boss so-and-so tell me—— And he described an outlay of some thousands of dollars, more money than he had ever met or could understand the meaning of. The highest social position that a nigger can fulfil is that of servant on board a mail train. You are not afraid, I asked Mr. Husband, that

when they outnumber the whites they will revolt? A successful revolt, he answered, implies organisation. And we spoke of Hayti, Mr. Husband telling what every schoolboy knows, but which I did not, that Hayti had belonged to the French, and that the French revolutionaries sent over a deputation conferring freedom upon the negroes, the first result of which was a massacre of the whites and then a massacre of each other. One of these negroes, he said, a half-caste, built a palace (the ruins are still there); but he was massacred in his stronghold; and now the negroes govern themselves with the aid of half a dozen American warships. Very lucky, I answered, it is for you Americans that the negro cannot be raised out of the slavery bestowed upon him by Nature.

Mr. Husband's anecdotes illustrating the childishness of negroes had enlivened our conversation, and unwilling that it should again darken, I asked him if his eyes could distinguish a gleam of light on our horizon. His cheerful optimism did not desert his voice even when he said that the world would continue its breakneck pace till it toppled over into the barbarism of the Middle Ages, just as you have predicted, Mr. Moore, emerging, much reduced by famine, a smaller but more beautiful planet. And it seeming to me that I dared not run the risk of losing the pleasing optimism of Mr. Husband's voice, I refrained from speaking of the desolating tide of children flooding our doorways, and spoke instead of my Parisian life, l'École des Beaux-Arts, Cabanel, Manet, and Montmartre, peopling my anecdotes with those who assembled at Tortoni's during the 'seventies, relating as a *bonne bouche* my last visits to the great tribe of Impressionists, now reduced to two, Monet and Mary Casatt; and Mr. Husband listened, as all Americans listen to tales of Paris, till he began to remember that his days in London were numbered and that he must not miss a night of long sleep. For heaven only knows when the chance of a ten-hours' sleep will come again, he said; I think I told you that I have to leave my bed

at seven? Yes, I remember, I answered, and it is now going on for midnight. But do not leave on account of me; I sleep on in the morning and rise when I am rested. Mr. Husband hesitated, as if he had something still in his mind to say, and I wondered what it could be. We have talked, he said, when I opened the front door for him, about a great many things, without, however, mentioning my handwriting. You see, I am now in business and am afraid it would be rather too long a job to copy out the whole book, but if you would like a chapter of it—— My dear Mr. Husband, your letters are enough; and after bidding him good-bye once more, I returned to my Aubusson carpet and my lyre-shapen clock feeling that I would have done better to have talked less and to have drawn Mr. Husband into further confidences about himself. But no further confidences would have helped me to understand him better than his first avowal: that after leaving Harvard University he had gone down into a coal mine in search of—what? The last thing that anybody would suspect—life, primal, fundamental life. I sought, but without finding them, the words in which he said he had gone down into the mine in search of primal life. He said nothing about escaping from conventions and prejudices—what did he say? I asked myself, and stirred the fire without being able to recall his words. The words, however, that I am sure of, are: If I had been in Europe I might have done as you did, gone to France and lived in Montmarte, but being in America there was nothing for me to do but go down into a coal mine. How admirable! How altogether admirable! In these words we see the man from end to end, we weigh him, we appraise him. And before a dwindling fire I sat for a long time thinking of Mr. Husband's sea voyage, his arrival in New York, pausing after rising from my chair so that I might better consider the question whether he would sleep a night in New York or catch a train to take him to Chicago. The answer came: He is too eager to see his wife again to wait in New York; he will catch the train.

CHAP. II

The fire was now burning brightly and would do so for another hour, and it seeming a shame to allow so beautiful a fire to burn in solitude, I laid myself out in my armchair and abandoned myself to its warmth and to the pleasant belief of having said many interesting things to Mr. Husband, who would carry them overseas, giving attention to them now an then in an article in a newspaper or a review, or by word of mouth, treating me as if I were a flower garden, going round the beds, watering-pot in hand, bringing sweet refreshment to all my flowers, my tulips, forget-me-nots, mignonette, and some London Pride, for a border, of course. He seemed to have understood everything and to have sympathised—but good heavens! I forgot to speak to him of the English language, abundant in the dictionary, but tenuous in our speech. A sad spectacle indeed is the deathbed of a language, one that drove me out of England twenty years ago in search of a small, primitive language undefiled by journalism. Or was it hatred of the Boer War that drove me to Ireland to assist at the revival of the Irish language, which the Irish people had been able to do nothing with when they had it, whether from lack of talent in the race or some defect in the language itself, I cannot tell, and looking beyond myself I am doubtful if anybody could be found to answer so recondite a question; nor can I tell what was my main motive in leaving my friends, everything I had known and felt and heard and seen, for the Gael, of whom I knew nothing.

I have often been told that I am the most impulsive of men, and I feel this to be true, yet I am a very patient man, as patient with my literature as a woman is with a child. To discover the ineptitude of the Gael in art took me about eighteen months, and I have told elsewhere, I think, how the writing of *The Untilled Field* (a book written for the purpose of supplying the Gael with some examples of short stories

which he would imitate, which his children's children would imitate—for in about a hundred years, I thought, Ireland would be again a Gaelic-speaking country) robbed me of my faith in the Gael. It is not, however, uncommon to find a man practising a religion after he has lost faith in it, and I continued to cry for many years with ever-diminishing voice : Gaelic for the Gael ! till one evening, returning home from a visit I had paid to John Eglinton's little house, one of the old coaching inns, now overlooking a convent garden, it occurred to me that Gaelic being dead beyond all hope of resurrection, it might be worth while to preach the revival of Elizabethan English to the Gael, who was without interest in language for its own sake, who desired the Gaelic language only because it would separate him from England. Said I to John Eglinton : The second person singular would be a great help. Even the Gaels could learn to *thou* and *thee* each other ; *thou* and *thee* would become a Gaelic banner and afterwards would be adopted by English writers.

Yeats, whose business it is to set people on the wrong track, warned me against the second person singular, and during the first fifty pages of *The Brook Kerith* I tried to stint myself to the miserable *you*, which is not a word but a letter of the alphabet, at least in sound ; but to weed out the *yous* means something more than grammatical changes ; every sentence has to be recast ; the rearrangement of the verbs is difficult sometimes, but of very nearly the same disciplinary advantage as the use of metre. Moreover, I had but to remember the Sussex peasants, whom I knew well at the end of the 'sixties. There was plenty of thouing and theeing on the Downs in the 'seventies, and no other speech is valuable. Pace, the Editor of *The Spectator*, once wrote to me that he was glad the second person singular was no longer used, for its use betokened class differences. A strangely superficial opinion this seems to me, and I have often wondered if the Editor of *The Spectator's* transcendental world is a universal tribe, eating the same dinners, wearing the same clothes, speaking the same

language. I prefer to think that his letter to me was written without thought, and that he has already come to understand that the pleasure of living, if there be any pleasure in living, exists in differences rather than in similarities.

To return to forms of speech that I heard on the Sussex Downs in my youth. Never did anybody on the Downs say *over there ;* it was always *over yonder,* and it was a real sorrow to me when a man in the street in which I live, after taking a direction from me that he needed, replied : Yes, over yonder, and corrected himself to : over there, ashamed lest he had betrayed his country origin. To him I said : Sir, you began in excellent English, but on second thoughts you returned to the flat, worn-out idiom that is written in the newspapers and spoken in drawing-rooms. We are becoming too ' nice.' *Sick* means *ailing,* but to avoid the good old word *puke* we say *sick.* How much nobler to say : I *puked* all the way from Calais to Dover. So far as my small power permits me, I have striven hard to accustom the London drawing-room to the word *belly,* being convinced that there is no real morality in substituting *stomach* for *belly* : and invariably I interrupt her who speaks of her dog as a lady—Madam, I suppose you refer to your bitch. My authority is slight, but such as it is I have tried to use it. *Ewe* is an absurd word, and as shepherds always speak of the female sheep, as a *yoe,* I have spelt the word throughout *The Brook Kerith* as *y-o-e* ; mayhap it would be better spelt with a *w.* We write *q-u-a-y-s* ; we say *k-e-y-s.* Why turn an *a* into an *e* ? There's much too much *e* in modern English. And of all, why not say lil*ac* ? I say it whenever I get the chance. Before the word *yaller* I still hesitate, hoping that greater courage will be given to me next time. *Hither* and *thither* are only used in speech in the phrase : going hither and thither ; yet how much prettier it is to say : Come hither ; go thither. Why has *the which* fallen out of use ? It is both an elegant and useful locution. Truly, we are losing our words and, worse still, all innocency of thought. A country woman does not say : I'll go upstairs and try to

find it ; she says : I'll go upstairs and have a look round. She does not say : I'll refrain from looking at so-and-so ; she says : I'll keep myself from looking at so-and-so. False images prevail in modern London speech among the upper classes. Society is always being *shaken to the roots*, and it would be interesting and instructive to keep an account of all the solecisms, pleonasms and French words that have crept into the language, overlaying, poisoning our homely English speech at its very spring head, in the market-places, villages and fields.

I wish I had told Mr. Husband how one day whilst partridge-shooting with a friend in the north of England I began to forget the shooting, and on my friend asking me for the reason of my inattention, I answered : I am thinking of the beautiful English your gamekeeper speaks. But is not your aim in writing, he asked, to write the language of good society ? I cried out like a dog whose tail has been trodden on, and told him : Not at all ! My object is to separate myself as far as possible from the language spoken in good society. And to explain to him what I meant, I searched among the money in my pocket for an old coin, and finding one almost defaced, I said : This sixpence represents the language that is spoken in society. And my friend, being a man of taste, was converted to the beautiful, idiomatic English spoken by his gamekeeper ; and in the evening after dinner he told me of many beautiful locutions he had heard in the fields and woods and had laughed at, thinking them vulgar, but knowing at the bottom of his heart that he was not thinking the truth.

And I might have told Mr. Husband of the many things I said to Mr. Fisher when returning with him after the opera through the Green Park. It is true that during the hustle of the Strand I wasted much of my opportunity, speaking to him of the women we had met in Lady Cunard's box, but under the moon in St. James's Park the impulse was irresistible to tell Mr. Fisher that his scheme for unlimited education would bring about the destruction of the English language. The

peasant is the source, I said, whence language comes. The country forms of speech are nearly always beautiful, whereas those that our streets beget are ugly. Mr. Fisher, visibly stirred by admonitions, did not deny that education might reduce manual labour, but he hoped those who were unfitted to apply the education they had received would return to the mine and the field, and I made show of interest in his defence of his schools, for it does not follow that because a man is a Minister he is a fool; personally he may think with Solon, but his acts are in accordance with public opinion. He is like Charles the Second, who when charged with never having said a foolish thing and never having done a wise one, replied: My words are my own; my acts are my Ministers'. Mr. Fisher knows that the intelligences we bring into the world are not the same; some can take education like certain steel which takes an edge, and these find the education they want instinctively; others are dipped into the pot in vain, and these are the many. Mr. Fisher knows this, but he has public opinion behind him, and being a Minister of Education he could not agree with me when I told him that I would prefer to see him as the Minister of War. For as Minister of War you would not want to set up a barrack in every village, and the Minister who would replace you at the Education Office would not strain your theory that education can develop the brain; he would be content with the old faith, we remain as God made us. After we had passed Buckingham Palace I told him that scholarships and literature did not overlap, that very often scholarships extinguished genius but that a lack of scholarships never stifled it, making good my case over the names of Theocritus and Burns. In the art of painting, too, I said, detaining him at the curb, the uneducated surpass the educated. The two best painters we have are self-taught, Mark Fisher and Wilson Steer. Would you, Mr. Fisher asked, suppress the schools—Kensington and Westminster? and I answered: It is impossible to prevent people from teaching, but I would not have any school of art placed upon

the rates, for by doing so you retrograde the natural course of art and produce a serious shortage in the supply of domestic servants. All art asks for is to be let alone ; every attempt to advance art is to discourage art. And I might have spoken with advantage to Mr. Fisher of his curriculum, which includes, I believe, some instruction in the French language.

Anything more useless than instruction in French I cannot imagine, for to learn a foreign language is the job of a lifetime, and only those possessed of the gift of a certain linguistic faculty can learn French even imperfectly. A few rare individuals can learn the grammar and apply it, and these are not infrequently without any command over idiom ; others who can pick up idiom easily, neglect to study the grammar, and so both are deficient, and the rare man who has learnt French thoroughly can do anything with it ; he just knows it and that is all, and we look upon him as we do upon a mummy ; he is as useless ; he is harmful, for as much knowledge of the French language, enough to enable a man to read a newspaper, is destructive to the English language. At certain seasons locusts fall upon a country and devour it, leaf by leaf, and in the same way French words have within the last few years fallen upon the English language and are eating up the English words. The grey squirrel eats the red, and *résumé* has not only eaten but digested *summary*. It is difficult to conjecture why *résumé* has replaced the English word, or why a lady should, in speaking of another lady, delight in the expression : *Elle est si raffinée*, or why the journalist writes *petite* instead of *small*, unless, indeed, he imagines that *petite* means *dainty*. I have often thought to collect the French words that are ousting their English equivalents : *nuance* instead of *shade*, *naïveté* instead of *innocency*, *camouflage* instead of *disguise*. *Éclat* and *démarche* can be translated by different English words. But everybody is in such a hurry, particularly those who have got nothing to do, that to save time social speech is no more than tags, English and French. Lord Askwith wrote

a letter to *The Daily Mail* of not more than ten lines, into which he introduced the words *compagnon de voyage*, and so pleased was he with his knowledge of French that he could not keep himself from using the phrase again in the same letter; nor could he stay his hand when *camouflage* came under the pen. Forty years ago, when I returned from France, I discovered that *intrigue* was not an English verb, and I never used it in that way again, but to-day nobody can speak for more than five minutes without using *intrigue* as a verb, and would look upon himself as dishonoured if he wrote to the newspapers and omitted to say: It intrigues me to learn. . . . It was not until I wrote in a mood of exasperation to the Editor, telling him that *modiste* was a milliner and not a dressmaker, that the word disappeared from my newspaper; and how many letters, anonymous and signed, did I not write beseeching him to inform his contributors that *wanton* did not mean wicked, and that to write: The wanton destruction of French property by the Germans, instead of: The systematic destruction, was very poor English. *Wanton curls*, *wanton breezes*—but it is all in vain. The newspapers have a language of their own, and it should be enough for me to be allowed to omit French words from my own writings. Why should I wish to keep them out of the newspapers? Because, like another, I am not reasonable; or is it because our language cannot assimilate any more French words without losing its character? Borrowings from the German would seem to me less reprehensible; I would Teutonise the English language.

The fire is sinking, and the French clock, amid its yellowing marbles and wedgwood plaques, strikes one. It is time for me to go to bed.

CHAP. III

Now what is to be done with this wretched article? I said, awaking from my meditation on the qualities of the departed

guest; and taking up *Impressions and Opinions* I turned over the leaves, but laid the book aside suddenly, disquieted by the opening: a city seen upon a violet evening, with a traveller striving through suburb after suburb, and arriving at last at *Eugénie Grandet* the certain capital of La Comédie Humaine. In former days I thought the capital was *Les Illusions Perdues*, no doubt captivated by Balzac's ordering of Lucien's clothes; but even in my immaturity I was not without the thought that the way for English readers is through the minor pieces rather than through the major. Very likely; but, like the whale, I must vomit this Balzac and swallow another, keeping the translations, which might be worse. . . . And turning the leaves over I came on the place where the article should begin! Here the beginning is inoffensive, and in my circumstance it is enough to avoid always the flagrantly offensive. My thoughts flitted from him whom I had described somewhat irreverently in *Vale* as a great *destrier*, slow to rise out of the dust of the roadway, but who, once on his hooves, could be heard from afar like thunder; by no means an excellent simile, one which I should not think of using in the book which is to replace *Impressions and Opinions*—a simile which I quote without being able to discover any reason in myself for the quotation; one cannot be held responsible for every thought that comes into one's mind, and every memory. . . . And my thoughts still flitting, passed from the great Touranian to Zola, to the day when I went to call on him at Medan, to the essential hour when I sat by the sofa on which the master rested, satisfied in his glory, whilst I, almost a boy, strove to ingratiate myself, saying everything that I thought would please him and succeeding very well up to a point, but bringing a cloud into the master's face when I agreed with him that his article on Balzac was not altogether a success. So great was my nervousness that I might have told him unwittingly that Henry James's article on Balzac was better, much better, and very likely would have done so had I read Henry James's

article. I had not; my ignorance saved me; and before Alexis arrived I had gained a place in the master's esteem.

And returning from long ago to Ebury Street, I began to consider all articles on Balzac as bad, and that it might be wiser to abandon *Impressions and Opinions* for a new story. But no sooner had I begun to take pleasure in my escape from my old book of odds and oddments than I remembered that the library edition must contain a volume of criticism. I had come to loathe the essay, and whilst looking at it I had begun one in my thoughts, a long essay on a serious subject—the vanity of education or some more suitable title, instead of applying myself to my job: to contrive a volume of criticism to replace *Impressions and Opinions*. This must be done, said I to myself, though the tide of enforced education come in and overwhelm the natural intelligence of man. This volume of criticism must be forthcoming and quickly, for I have signed for twenty volumes, and whosoever reads me expects to hear me speak about Balzac. Whereupon I began to rue the time I had spent talking about Mr. Fisher; Husband would have been better pleased to hear me say that though it is not the lot of all critics to be remembered by what they failed to understand, Sainte-Beuve's failure to appreciate Balzac's genius will assure him of the sneers of many a generation, and *the pot of paint flung in the face of the public* will survive Ruskin's finest prose passage. What should I know of Janin if Zola, in an admittedly inadequate article, had not pointed out that the journalist overlooked the importance of Lucien's daily expenditure in the little grub-shop, and that by stressing it Balzac was introducing a new element into fiction—the value of money.

Balzac is too vast for an article, and that is why it occurred to me to lead the reader by way of the minor pieces into the company of two thousand men and women and children. New faces meet us at every turn; hundreds of human souls float round and round as if in a vortex, the usurer everywhere, governing his own section as he governs it in life. We find

all types of men and women : peasants working in fields and drinking in the inns, courtesans in the streets and in palaces, old men preyed upon by unscrupulous women, who in turn are the victims of unscrupulous young men. Balzac was a great harvester and his sheaves were souls : poets who waste their talents in love-dreams, diners-out who waste theirs in quips. As we read on, volume after volume, our wonder increases, for we come upon allusions full of anticipatory insight into those problems of clairvoyance and hypnotism and auto-suggestion which modern science is classifying within the natural ; yes, and in *The Human Comedy* all the incidents of the land war in Ireland—the murder of the bailiff in *Les Paysans* differs barely from the many such murders we have read of in Ireland, and the boycotting of the General might be included with very little alteration in Captain Boycott's memoirs.

It will be asked how Balzac, who went to his bed at six o'clock in the evening and rose from it at twelve o'clock to write till six o'clock the next evening—shifts of eighteen hours—could have found time to experience the life he was describing, to enter into and tell minutely the soul secrets of more than two thousand men and women, and to endure this life not for the space of a week but for months at a time. The question is asked every time a book or an essay on Balzac is published, and whenever Balzac's name is mentioned in literary circles somebody says that he must have donned a footman's livery else he could not have described the salons of the Faubourg St. Germain, to which a better thinker answers that Balzac knew from the beginning how life was made and did not need to observe it. Only in the arts was he at fault ; the arts cannot be divined, and let it be confessed that he shows himself often as sciolist, and nowhere more so than in *La Cousine Bette*, a book written in six weeks—shifts of eighteen hours—containing some souls that abide in eternity, reappearing with unimportant, casual modifications in every age and country—le Baron Hulot and his wife,

who overhears her husband telling a servant girl that at the death of his wife she might be Madame la Baronne; Madame Marnieff, too, is in this book. The people of *The Human Comedy* are rarely social figments, more or less carefully described, nearly always the clear embodiments of a great visionary. His pen commands; visions fill his brain and are noted in his lonely garret, a cup of black coffee at his elbow. So did he write, for it was possible to write *The Human Comedy* in this way, and if I have told the story for the thousandth time, it is only to make plain my reasons for confining this paper to the minor pieces. Why rush into an essay on Balzac? for none can convey to a reader any faintest idea of the unsearchable Grandet—of his wife, his daughter, or his servant, of the drunken but brave soldier in *Un Ménage de Garçon*, of Lucien de Rubempré, of the Père Goriot, of Canalis, of——

I will begin with *Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan*: Many aristocratic fortunes dependent on the Court were swept away in the disasters of July, and Madame la Princesse de Cadignan was clever enough to attribute her ruin, which was really due to her extravagances, to these political crises. The Princess, married when she was sixteen to her mother's lover, the Duke de Maufrigneuse—queen of all queens of fashion under her first name, La Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, retired from the world to a small apartment consisting of no more than five rooms, where she devoted herself to her son's education. And when the time comes for the Princess to tell the story of her life to D'Arthez, she speaks thus of the Duchesse d'Uxelles:

I was never angry with the Duchesse for having loved Monsieur de Maufrigneuse better than poor Diana, and this is why. My mother had seen very little of me; she had forgotten me; but she behaved towards me in a way which is wicked between women and can only be described as horrible between mother and daughter. Mothers whose lives are like that of the Duchesse d'Uxelles keep their daughters

far from them, and it was not until a fortnight before my marriage that I was introduced into society. You can guess my innocence ; I knew nothing ; I was without wit to suspect the trap that had been set. I had a fine fortune. Monsieur de Maufrigneuse was overwhelmed with debts, and if I know now what it is to be in debt, my knowledge of life then was too slight for me even to suspect the danger. My fortune enabled the Duke to economise and so to pacify his creditors. He was thirty-eight when I married him, but these years were like those of military campaigns ; they should count double. Ah ! he was more than seventy-six. At forty my mother still had pretensions to good looks, and I found myself between two jealousies. What an existence was mine for ten years ! Ah ! if it were known what this poor, little, suspected woman has suffered, watched by a mother jealous of her daughter ! Good heavens, you who write dramas will never invent anything so black, so cruel, as that ! Oh, my friend, you men cannot guess what life is with an old man *à bonnes fortunes*, a man accustomed to the adoration of women of the world, and who finds neither incense nor censer at home, dead to everything and jealous for that very reason. I desired when the Duke de Maufrigneuse was wholly mine to be a good woman ; but I came into rough contact with an embittered mind, with all the caprices of impotence, with all the puerilities of folly, with all the vanities of self-sufficiency, with a man who was in fine the most tiresome elegy in the world, who treated me like a child, and amused himself by humiliating my self-esteem at every turn, overwhelming me with his experience, and proving me ignorant in all things. So did the Princess coo in the ears of the great man who sat at her feet listening to her as a neophyte in one of the first days of the Christian faith might have listened to the epistle of an apostle.

Understand that the actors in this scene from Parisian life are a princess who has dissipated many fortunes, her own and those of her lovers, who knows all sensations except love,

whose drawing-room is her temple, and whose ritual is love-confidences ; the other is a man of genius, who knows the world theoretically, as Balzac knew it, and who in practice was as childlike as Balzac himself ; and that is why D'Arthez was chosen. Fools love well sometimes, said the Marquise d'Espard to the Princess when the two friends sat together regretting that they had never loved any one of their many lovers : Fools love well sometimes.

But, replied the Princess, for this (that is to say, to believe in the speakers) even fools would not be sufficiently credulous. You are right, said the Marquise, laughing. And it is neither a fool nor yet a man of talent that we should seek. To solve such a problem a man of genius is necessary. Genius alone has childlike faith, the religion of love, and allows his eyes to be banded. Look at Canalis and the Duchesse de Chaulieu. If you and I have met geniuses, we were too occupied, too frivolous, too carried away, too taken up with other things. But I would not leave the world without knowing the delights of true love, cried the Princess. It is nothing to inspire it, said Madame d'Espard, the difficulty is to feel it. I see many women who are only pretexts of a passion instead of being at once the cause and the effect.

These creatures of the drawing-room meet in middle age to hold conversations on the nature of love, and out of these the action of the story springs. *Qui a bu, boira*, the Princess grown tired of solitude and motherly duties, yearns for a new emotion, and Daniel d'Arthez is sought ; Rastignac and De Trailles are commissioned to draw him from his studies. Genius meets worldly sagacity, and the accomplished charmer is shown spinning her web, her lovely head leaned upon her long white fingers in the lamplight, determined that this is to be no passing caprice ; if she gives herself again it will be to a lover who believes her innocent, pure, incapable of untruth. And the man of genius, sceptical when sitting at his writing-table as Mephistopheles, is candid as a little child sitting at the feet of the Princess. How true this is ! The

philosopher is a child when he strives to put his knowledge into practice, the man of the world is a child when he strives to put his knowledge into words.

Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan might be entitled : *The Seduction of Genius by Experience.* It is animated by a sublime comprehension of the fascinating perversities of cerebral passion, and the confiding simplicities of a great man, who, wearied like Faust, with learning, desires the repose and consolation of love. *Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan* might also be entitled : *The Philosophy of the Drawing-room.* It is the drawing-room in essence. The Princess is a being born of the drawing-room ; she has been formed and coloured by the drawing-room as an insect by the chemical qualities and the colour of the plant upon which it lives. Her ideas of love, literature, art, and science are drawing-room ideas of love, literature, art, and science. The intonations of her voice, and every inflection of accent, have been produced by the drawing-room. Her weariness of life is drawing-room weariness of life. She is a creature of the drawing-room as the horse is a creature of the stable, as the eagle is of the cliff.

A book of maxims might be garnered in Balzac's novels, and not a few might be taken from this little story of not more than forty pages. Yes, when we are young we are full of fatuous stupidities ; we resemble those poor young men who play with a toothpick to make believe that they have dined well. What is to be gained by leaving your husband ? In a woman it is an admission of feebleness. One of the glories of society is to have created woman where Nature made a female, to have created a continuity of desire where Nature thought only of perpetuating the species ; in fine, to have invented love.

Adieu is an example of Balzac's romantic manner. The story is introduced by two sportsmen who, having sought game all the morning, wander into the shade of a wood in the hope of finding a house or habitation of some kind ; and coming

upon a ruined Abbey they stand spell-bound, so great is the desolation and ruin about them. In Balzac's words, a woman passes from a group of walnut trees by an iron gate lightly as the shadow of a cloud, and the men watch her, their surprise passing into amazement when they see her climb an apple tree and seat herself on one of the boughs, seize the fruit, eat, and then let the apples fall half-eaten. And their amazement quickens when descending from the tree she rolls upon the ground as a child might, throwing her feet and hands forward, remaining stretched upon the grass with the abandonment, the grace, and the naturalness of a young cat asleep in the sun. Adieu, she cried in a soft, harmonious voice, lacking, however, those notes of human interest which the two men would have welcomed. One of the men suddenly recognises the woman, and the sight of her affects him so violently that he falls to the ground like one dead ; and his friend, fearing some terrible heart seizure, points his gun upwards and fires into the air to bring help quickly, the report of the gun clearly awakening in the woman (a moment ago blithe as a butterfly in the sunshine, now running hither and thither like a frightened hare) echoes of some terrible misfortune.

The reader will guess that the man who fell, overwhelmed at the sight of the half-witted woman, is none other than her lover, a soldier in Napoleon's army and with her when it encamped to kill the horses and eat them on the banks of the frozen Beresina.

I would I had space to give some of the details by which Balzac evokes the very motion, colour, smell, and sound of war ; for these the reader must turn to the text itself, getting from me the mere thread of the story, that among the war-stricken fugitives there is a General and his wife, and Philip de Susy, who is striving to save their lives, striving to get them to the bridge before it is destroyed by the troops on the other side. But his last horse has been seized and eaten. He steals, however, horses from the Russian sentries, which are

tied to the carriages, and they drive over the bodies of sleeping soldiers. You can't make an omelette without breaking the eggs, cries the grenadier, pricking the horses with his sword-point. But the bridge is burnt before they can reach it; a raft is constructed, place is made for the woman, and she cries: Adieu, to Philip. But the husband is thrown from the raft and killed among the ice, and, without a protector, lost in the disaster of the retreat, she follows the track of the army for two years, the plaything of every ruffian. She knows all the misfortunes of war, hunger, cold, and cruelty, to be at last rescued from a madhouse in Germany and brought back to France. And the business of the story is to tell how her lover strives to win her out of her animality, for she is as a charming, wayward animal; and he tries to coax her daintily, until the old uncle finds him one day loading his pistols to shoot her.

Poor little one, cries her uncle, pressing the poor crazy thing to his breast, he would have killed you, egoist that he is; he would kill you because he suffers. He knows not how to love you for yourself, my child. We will forgive him. He is insane, and you are only crazed. Go! God alone should call you to himself. We think you are unhappy because you can share no longer our miseries—fools that we are! But, said he, placing her on his knees, you are happy, nothing annoys you; you live like the bird, like the hind.

She rushed and caught a young blackbird, crushed it, looked at it, and left it at the foot of a tree without thinking anything more about it.

Come, cried Philip, taking her in his arms, do you not feel my heart beating? I love you always. Philip is not dead. He is here, you lean upon him. You are my Stephanie, and I am your Philip.

Adieu, cried she, adieu!

Balzac carries the story further, but for our purpose it is not necessary to carry it to its exquisite conclusion. Enough it will be to suggest that there is in Ophelia much tender

appreciation of the little space that divides the sane from the insane, and the immensity of the responsibility which the transition, slight in itself, involves; but is the haunting question, have we gained in happiness since acquiring the power of looking before and after, so tenderly insinuated?

In these days when our literary ambitions are satisfied by writing nothing that young ladies may not discuss openly in their drawing-rooms, *Sarrasine*, a eunuch, will not find favour. Since Don Juan exclaimed against donning woman's attire, saying that it involved a denial of his sex, and got for answer:

> Don it, or I will call
> One who will leave you with no sex at all,

the third sex has been barred from our homespun as indelicate, and the report is current that my old friends Mudie and Smith went in search of advice and that they left the bishop's palace convinced that the Syrian eunuch differs in many little ways from the Roman: as Sarrasine hails from Rome and not from Bagdad the twain had no choice but to exclude him from select circulation—a process of reasoning which will seem less obscure when I tell that he was the leading soprano in the papal choir and the favourite of a cardinal whose wealth he inherited.

But it is in his old age that Balzac shows him to us, his strange beauty gone, a phantom, a ghost, a legend, that his relatives keep hidden away in a great palace where nobody sees him, so ashamed are they of him and anxious to conceal the source of their wealth. It happens, however, that despite their precautions to keep him out of sight, a guest, during the progress of a great ball in the palace, sees him pass through a curtained doorway, and turning to a friend, or to whosoever happens to be by him, asks in terror: Did you see? The other guest knows Sarrasine's story, and the two withdraw to a balcony, one to hear and the other to tell how a young Frenchman, captivated by the voice and the beauty of

Sarrasine in his youth, and believing him to be a woman, perished by the hand of an assassin.

In allowing one of the guests to tell Sarrasine's story to another guest, Balzac may have chosen wisely, but an oblique narrative demands more care than Balzac was able to bestow upon it, and we cannot but think that *Sarrasine* was one of his hastily improvised stories. It is said that *La Grenadière* was improvised in eighteen hours ; it may have been, and if it were we must assume that his black coffee failed to keep him sufficiently awake. And the same ill-luck, we think, befell *Sarrasine*. Balzac did not lose himself so completely in it as he did in *La Grenadière* ; but if *Sarrasine* be almost negligible as art its importance in the history of prose narrative is great, for whosoever reads *The Human Comedy* thoughtfully will learn from it that the niche we should reserve for the abnormal is a very small one, and that the man of talent should refrain from introducing it into his stories, for though one man can steal the horse, another may not look over the hedge ; and of all, let the man of talent not be led away by Terence's noble aphorism : I am a man and may not consider anything in humanity alien from myself.

One word more on the abnormal. It will be better for the industrious compiler of what is known as English fiction to continue to choose an ordinary, every-day story, for in developing it any originality of mind and vision he may possess will appear to advantage. Balzac finds lights that we would not willingly be without in the abnormal, but it cannot be contended that *La Fille aux Yeux d'Or* is worth *Le Curé de Tours* or that anybody would hesitate if a choice were given him between *Sarrasine* or *Une Vieille Fille*.

Although somewhat lost amid numberless chefs-d'œuvre, although rarely cited as a striking example of Balzac's genius, *Une Vieille Fille* is one of the first among the minor pieces. It seems to me to epitomise the resources of a mind profound and, at least in the conception of a subject, sensible to art. In *Une Vieille Fille* we meet a certain philosophic criticism

peculiar to Balzac, and three characters conceived with imaginative incisiveness and executed with an alertness of thought only to be found in his very best work, and some two or three dramatic moments. The first of these is when at the dinner-hour the fair laundress slips into the Chevalier's room and confesses her trouble to him. He is far too cunning to show that he disbelieves her story.

With phrases in harmony with the traces of prosperous days that linger about the room—traces of the eighteenth century—he sends her away to lay the charge of seduction at the door of his rival Du Bousquier. The scene with Du Bousquier is equally good, for in it Balzac achieves his intention, which was to portray and, in portraying, to show how these two old bachelors, who are both intriguing one against the other for the hand and fortune of Mlle. Cormon, represent the ideas and outward appearance of two distinct epochs—the Chevalier de Valois, the aristocracy and elegance of the eighteenth century, Du Bousquier, the vulgarity and commercialism of the nineteenth. Another exquisite moment is when Mlle. Cormon hears that the Vicomte de Troisville is a married man, and yet another when the Chevalier comes to ask the hand of Mlle. Cormon. But this fine gentleman could only be killed in one way ; he had lived by the Graces, and it was right that he should die by their hand. Whilst the Chevalier had been putting the finishing hand to his toilette, Du Bousquier entered the drawing-room of the disconsolate maid.

The soul of the story is the desire of Mlle. Cormon to be married, and the difficulties which beset her project. Through this simple subject Balzac passes as with a lantern in his hand, showing us how the conscription had affected the marriage market and how the republican spirit persisted, and, notwithstanding the restoration, was beginning to make itself felt in the social life of the remote provinces ; we are made to feel too that the monarchy is ephemeral and that republicanism is the abiding force, that its eclipse is more apparent than real.

Yet the machinery of this story, in which so many grave subjects enter, is the very simplest, and it is put in motion by one of Madame Lardot's laundresses, who, as we have seen, thought first of laying a charge of seduction against the elegant Chevalier but who was easily persuaded that it would be to her far greater advantage to lay the charge against his rival Du Bousquier. Here are a few extracts from Balzac's description of an elderly gentleman, long, dry, and penniless, the greater part of whose youth had been passed in Paris, where, when he was about thirty, the revolution had surprised him in the midst of his conquests, but who now lived *en province* in two rooms above Madame Lardot's laundry, in the midst of grisettes, whom he looks kindly upon, making them presents of bits of ribbon and slight packets of chocolate creams :

He dined out every day and he played cards every evening. He passed for being a witty man, thanks to a defect which consisted in telling numberless anecdotes concerning the reign of Louis XV and the beginning of the revolution. When these stories were heard for the first time they were considered to be well told. Though the Chevalier de Valois never ascribed his witticisms to himself, nor spoke of his love affairs, his graces and his smiles were deliciously indiscreet. This good gentleman availed himself of the privilege of an old Voltairean noble not to attend mass, but his irreligion was looked upon indulgently on account of his devotion to the Royal cause. One of his graces, and the most remarked, was his manner, doubtless imitated from De Molé, of taking snuff from an old gold box ornamented with the portrait of the Princess Goritza, a charming Hungarian, celebrated for her beauty in the reign of Louis XV. Devoted to this illustrious stranger, in his youth he always spoke of her with emotion ; and it was on her account that he had fought with Monsieur de Lauzun.

The Chevalier was now fifty-eight, but he never admitted to more than fifty ; and the fib was accepted as truth, for he

kept that slimness of figure which, it would seem, is the prerogative of dry and blond men, and among women as well as men, carries into middle age the semblance of youth. Yes, learn that all life, or all elegance, which is the expression of life, exists in the waist. Among the Chevalier's belongings must be numbered the nose which Nature had given him, a nose that divided, and trenchantly, his pale face into two sections that did not match, for one reddened during the labour of digestion. This fact is worthy of remark in a time when physiology occupies so much attention. The incandescence was on the left side.

Although the long, slim legs, the lank body and the pallid complexion of Monsieur de Valois did not proclaim a healthy constitution, he ate like an ogre, and sought to excuse his excessive appetite by pretending to be afflicted with a malady known *en province* as a hot liver. The flushing of his face gave a certain credence to this story. But in a country where meals lengthen into thirty or forty dishes and last for four hours, the stomach of the Chevalier must have seemed a gift from Providence to the town. According to certain doctors the flushing of the left side of the face denotes a prodigal heart. The fast life of the Chevalier confirmed these assertions, happily relieving the historian from all responsibility. Notwithstanding these symptoms, Valois had a nervous constitution, consequently vivacious. If his liver burnt (*ardit*), to use an old expression, his heart did not burn less. If his face was lined, if his hair was silvered, a trained observer would have detected there the stigmas of passion and the furrows of pleasure. *En la patte d'oie caractéristique et les marches du palais se montraient ces rides élégantes, si prisées à la cour de Cythère.* In this spruce Chevalier everything pointed to a ladies' man. He was so minute in his ablutions that his cheeks were a pleasure to look upon ; they seemed to have been washed in some miraculous water, and that part of the skull which the hair refused to cover shone like ivory. Constant combing gave a false appearance of youth to his hair and

eyebrows. Without using perfume the Chevalier exhaled a perfume of youth that *rafraîchissait son air*. His gentlemanly hands, cared for like those of a *petite maîtresse*, attracted the eye by their rose-coloured nails carefully trimmed. If it were not for his majestic and superlative nose he would have been *poupin*. We must, however, spoil this portrait by an admission of a weakness. The Chevalier put cotton in his ears, and still continued to wear in them two little negroes' heads in diamonds, admirably fashioned, it is true ; and he strove to justify these singular appendages by saying that since he had had his ears pierced he no longer suffered from neuralgia. We do not offer the Chevalier as an accomplished man, but should we not forgive old bachelors whose hearts send so much blood to their faces ? and their adorable absurdities, are they not founded, perhaps, upon sublime secrets ? Besides, the Chevalier made up for the negroes' heads by so many other graces that society considered itself sufficiently indemnified.

I pass over the interview between the enterprising laundress and Du Bousquier, from whom she extorted six hundred francs, going immediately afterwards to lay her distressful case before Madame Granson, the treasurer of La Société Maternelle. It was necessary that Madame Granson should have a son who likewise aspired to the hand of Mlle. Cormon ; but it is not easy to say why Balzac thought fit to hamper the action of his story, hitherto so simple and direct, by making Suzanne in love with the melancholy young poet. Indeed the error is more grave than would appear at first sight. For the suggestion that Suzanne is in love with Athanase turns what would have been a perfect short story into a novel which has accidentally been cut down to the limits of a short story. And if a critic were to urge this reason for assigning a higher place to *Le Curé de Tours* than to *Une Vieille Fille*, I should admit that *Le Curé de Tours* is a more perfect story, and would be tempted to say that whereas no critic who has been at the job himself would deny that the long story and the short

one are two different things (as distinct as the sheep and the goat, from which two animals, I believe, no mule has ever been obtained), still there are many who think the short story should confine itself to a bare telling of an anecdote, a somewhat journalistic view of literature; anecdotes are very colourless and uninteresting when divorced from the circumstance that produces them, and to make my meaning clear I will say that the mere anecdote is not much more interesting than a drawing in outline, or the melody detached from its harmony. The melodic line interests the musician for the sake of the harmony it leads him into, and the anecdote is sought by the poet for the same reason, for the ideas that it evokes in his mind. His taste and genius are determined by his management of the melody on one hand and the harmony on the other. The painter must model, but he must be careful to keep the portrait in the canvas. It may be argued that sometimes Balzac over-models, over-harmonises, overwrites, but if my memory be not at fault (I have not read *Une Vieille Fille* for thirty years), the charge of over-weighting the anecdote cannot be urged against his admirable picture of Mlle. Cormon, of her country, her house, and her history.

On her famous Thursday evenings we see the *salon* lighted up and the guests arriving, the elegant Chevalier producing his box, gazing for a moment on the features of the Princess Goritza, and then taking snuff. We see the brutal and arrogant Du Bousquier, and the pale and melancholy poet who loves Mlle. Cormon sincerely; we hear the shrewd, poverty-stricken mother, Madame Granson, whispering to him: Look at the Chevalier; study him, imitate his manners, see with what ease he presents himself; his air does not seem borrowed, like yours. For goodness sake, speak; one would think you knew nothing, you, who know Hebrew by heart. There is the Abbé de Sponde, Mlle. Cormon's uncle. All these people assemble in the great square reception room; four doors, four windows draped with heavy green curtains, walls wainscoted with grey, painted wood, and an oblong

mirror above the chimney-piece. Everything breathes the old and unalterable *province*. And having painted with rare insight her house and her surroundings, Balzac sets to work to paint the portrait of *la vieille fille*, Mlle. Cormon : One gave one reason, another gave another, but the poor girl was as pure as an angel, healthy as a child, and full of goodness, for Nature had intended her to receive all the pleasures, all the happiness, and all the labours of maternity.

Nevertheless Mlle. Cormon did not find in her appearance any aids to her desire. She had no other beauty but that which is improperly called *la beauté du diable*, and which consists in the coarse freshness of youth, which, theologically speaking, the devil could not have, unless we may justify the expression by the constant desire to cool himself. The heiress's feet were large and flat ; her leg, which she often showed, but quite unintentionally, when she lifted her dress after rain, and when she stepped out of St. Léonard, could not be taken for the leg of a woman ; it was a sinewy leg, with a small calf, hard and pronounced like a sailor's. A thick, healthy waist, a bosom like a wet nurse's, strong and dimpling arms, red hands. Everything about her harmonised with the rounded form and the fat white beauty of Normandy. Prominent eyes of an undecided colour gave to the face, whose outlines were without nobility, an air of astonishment, of sheep-like simplicity, not unsuitable to an old maid ; if Rose had not been innocent, she would have looked as though she were. Her aquiline nose contrasted with the smallness of her forehead, for it is seldom that a nose so shapen does not imply a fine brow ; red, thick lips testify to a kind heart, but the brow betokened so little intelligence that it was clear the heart was not ruled by the head. It is possible to be good without being gracious. Virtue must be blameless always, though vice may plead the fault of her qualities. Her light brown hair, so strangely long, lent to her face that beauty which comes of force and of abundance, the two principal characteristics of Rose Cormon. In her best days Rose

affected a three-quarter view, so that a very pretty ear might be seen showing between the azured whiteness of her neck and her temples, and the ear was brought into still further evidence by the enormous head-dress. Seen in this way in a ball-dress she might appear to be good-looking. Her protuberant form, her waist, her vigorous health, drew from the officers of the Empire this exclamation : What a fine slip of a girl ! But with years the plumpness, increased by a life of virtue and tranquillity, had become so badly distributed over the body that it had destroyed its primitive proportions, and now no pair of stays could find her waist or her hips, and she appeared to be made in one straight block. . . .

Skipping some few lines of too minute physiological examination, we come upon this passage :

But the poor girl was already over forty ! At this moment, after having fought so long to acquire those interests which make a woman's life, but nevertheless, being forced to remain a maid she fortified her virtue by the most severe religious practices. She had had recourse to religion, that great consolation of carefully guarded virginities. Her confessor for the last three years had foolishly explained the theory of mortification to Mlle. Cormon, and had counselled the use of the scourge. These absurd practices had begun to spread a monastic tint over the face of Rose Cormon, and seeing her white skin taking those yellow tones which announce maturity she despaired. The light down which adorned the corners of her upper lip threatened to increase and spread like a whiff of smoke. The temples had begun to look glassy. In fine, decadence had commenced. It was known in Alençon that she suffered from heating of the blood ; she took the Chevalier into her confidence, enumerating the number of foot-baths, and consulting him concerning cooling medicines. The sly dog drew forth his snuff-box, and for form of conclusion contemplated the Princess Goritza.

Before proceeding further into our examination of the minor pieces, let us pause to consider what this fine passage

foretells. Until the end of the eighteenth century literature and painting were separable arts ; literature being occupied exclusively with thoughts, and not concerned with the folds of the dress, their shape, and the tones they took in the shadow, and again the tones they took when the lady bade her lover good-bye, passing as she said the words into the light of the lamp which stood on a small table, and whose pink shade was clearly defined on the rich purple of the window curtains. It was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that women began to shriek and sob amid the blue cushions of the sofa, and it was in eighteen hundred and eighty that Angelica stood in her ecstasy looking through the whiteness of the room.

But Balzac's description of Mlle. Cormon is something more than Zola's phrase : In ecstasy Angelica looked through the whiteness of the room. For by being quite sincere, that is to say unconscious that he was laying the foundation of a new art, Balzac did not forget that the intention of the old art was to lay bare the soul, and in writing the description of Rose's leg, his intention was to lay bare her soul, believing, as he undoubtedly did believe, that the soul can be read in the face, in the hand, even in the leg. When I came upon the description of her leg the book dropped from my hand, and I cried : The whole of Rose Cormon is in her leg. Yet the leg is but an accent in his portrait ; we remember the leg as a wonderful detail, but it does not arrest the reader's attention ; he is drawn on to the end of the paragraph, and at the end of the paragraph Rose Cormon stands outside of the little drama in which Balzac saw her involved. We see her in many stories of our own invention, as somebody we have known intimately in real life, part and parcel of our kind. And Balzac, possessing as strong a hold over dialogue as he does over description, rarely fails to supply his characters with the right words. For instance, how admirably suited to the occasion this is :

Mademoiselle, said he, in great haste, your uncle has sent you an express messenger ; the son of Mother Grosmort has

arrived with a letter. The fellow started from Alençon before daylight, and he has arrived all the same. He ran like Penelope (Penelope is Mlle. Cormon's bay mare). Shouldn't he have a glass of wine ?

What can have happened, Josette ? My uncle, could he——

He would not have written, said the lady's-maid, who had guessed her mistress's fears.

Quick ! quick ! cried Mlle. Cormon after having read the first lines. Let Jacquelin harness Penelope at once. And do you, my good girl, see that everything is packed in half an hour. We return to town at once.

Jacquelin ! cried Josette, stimulated by the sentiment which Mlle. Cormon's face expressed ; and instructed by Josette, Jacquelin came forward, saying :

But Penelope is eating her hay !

What does that matter ; I want to start at once.

But Mademoiselle, it is going to rain.

Well, then, we shall get wet.

The house is on fire, cried Josette, a little piqued by her mistress's silence, for after reading her letter she re-read it again and again.

Finish your coffee at least ; do not upset yourself ; see how red you are.

I am red, Josette, said she, going to a glass whence the quicksilver was peeling, and therefore gave back a distorted reflection of her face. My goodness, thought Mlle. Cormon, if I should look ugly.

Her worthy uncle had written to his niece that Monsieur de Troisville, a military officer who had seen service in Russia, the grandson of one of his firmest friends, intended to come and live at Alençon, and had asked for hospitality, whilst reminding him of the friendship which the Abbé had borne for his grandfather the Vicomte de Troisville, *chef d'escadron* under Louis XIV. The importance of this visit in the life of Mlle. Cormon was like that of Waterloo in the life of Napoleon. It

behoved Mlle. Cormon to rearrange her house. She turned her boudoir into a bedroom ; a new bed was bought to suit the room ; and the upshot of it all was the fainting of the poor lady in full view of all her guests on hearing the Vicomte reply to a question put to him by the Chevalier, that he has been married for the last fifteen years and has four children.

Rose's marriage disappointments, her desire of children, the entire philosophy of the married life of an old maid who has married an old man, is given with an insight and a power of wide comprehension of life and things that Balzac has never surpassed, because the last pages of *Une Vieille Fille* are unsurpassable.

One excellent reason for believing that the genius of Balzac can be approached through the minor pieces is the existence of the *Curé de Tours*, for unlike many of Balzac's short stories it is not a novel reduced to the limits of a short story—a bundle of events excellently well imagined, but hastily arranged, showing bad cutting and awkwardly sewed seams on every side. It begins at exactly the right point ; the development proceeds without long waits ; nowhere is there an unnecessary line ; and the art it recalls is that of Turgenev. Balzac had many qualities ; he was everything in turn, even delicate, and in the *Curé de Tours* the means are even slighter than the dropping of a handkerchief. The Abbé Birotteau returns home, happy at heart, for he has spent a delightful evening at Madame de Listonière's. His prospects of being made a canon have been discussed, the guests agreeing that he would be appointed. There are other reasons for his feeling singularly content with himself and the world. It is not very long since the Abbé Chapelaud left him by will the books and the furniture which the poor Abbé had not coveted, but which had been his *hoc erat in votis* for the last dozen years. The hope of a lifetime, realised only a year ago, and the memory still an active principle in him, and the pleasure of assurance that still further fortune awaited him, combined to render him almost indifferent to the danger of the shower in

which he had been caught, and the possible touch of gout it might result in. It seemed to him strange, however, that Marianne should keep him waiting some minutes before she opened the door ; and when Marianne, to excuse herself, said she was obeying Mademoiselle's orders, the gentle current of the Abbé's happiness stopped ; and on finding his candlestick, left outside his door instead of in the kitchen, according to custom, he entered his room in mute amazement, where another surprise awaited him, for there was no fire ; and the time that Marianne took to light one ! And all that night in the handsome bed that he had inherited from the Abbé Chapelaud, the Abbé lay, overcome and terrified by the presentiment of immeasurable misfortune, unable to banish from his mind the thought that the delay in opening the door, the removal of the candlestick, and the absence of the fire in his bedroom, could hardly be attributed to accident. At last the poor Abbé fell asleep, hoping that the morning would enlighten him concerning the motives of Mlle. Gamard's displeasure. But the secret motives of Mlle. Gamard's displeasure were destined to remain for ever unknown to him. Mlle. Gamard was an elderly maiden lady who always had priests as boarders. The Abbé Chapelaud had lived with her in the most perfect comfort for over a dozen years—nowhere a grain of dust, beautifully washed linen surplices, and albs smelling of iris, etc. On the ground floor the tall, angular, yellow-tinted Abbé Troubert, liked by nobody and not received by Madame de Listonière, lived in a damp, bare apartment. He, too, had his eye on the wide, airy apartment on the first floor, filled with the beautiful furniture that the Abbé Chapelaud had left to the Abbé Birotteau, and he says when the Abbé Birotteau is away spending the evening at Madame de Listonière's : The Abbé Birotteau does not find us amusing. He is a wit—a *gourmet* ! He likes fashionable society, brilliant conversation and the gossip of the town. It is thus that we hear for the first time of the terrible Abbé Troubert, who afterwards becomes so powerful : His hands

in Paris and his elbows on his table in Tours. But a word of explanation is necessary to make clear the terrible significance of the Abbé Troubert's words. It had long been Mlle. Gamard's ambition to have an At Home, and when the Abbé Birotteau came to occupy the apartment of the Abbé Chapelaud, he lingered after dinner in Mlle. Gamard's drawing-room, played *Boston* with her, and helped her and himself to pass an agreeable evening. The Abbé Birotteau, although quite witless, was good, kind, and amiable, and his presence in Mlle. Gamard's drawing-room attracted several other friends, and for a moment it seemed as if Mlle. Gamard was about to realise her life's ambition. But the Abbé, although himself a fool, like many another fool could not bear the conversation of fools, and when he took to spending his evenings at Madame de Listonière's, he brought away with him many other guests, and Mlle. Gamard was obliged to give up her *soirées*.

It is easy to imagine how this cruel thwarting of her social ambitions engendered in the heart of this old maid a ferocious hatred of the Abbé ; it is easy, I say, to imagine this hatred ; yes, it is easy to do so as we imagine things ; but Balzac's imagination is quite different from ours ; and using this simple theme as a loom he weaves a world of human passion, folly, goodness, and fashionable selfishness.

The story is one of pure observation—a great mind directed on what is commonly termed the minutiae of life. But are not things only great and small in proportion as we think of them ? Is not the world but man's thought, and in the envelope of Balzac's mind the little folk in the city of Tours rise up at once as large, as mean, and as pathetic as life itself—the little folk who are determined for a moment to defend the dear Abbé in the persecution that is being directed against him, but who, a moment after, are forced to abandon him to protect their own interests, which are being menaced by the terrible Abbé Troubert.

The story is fortunate in every way. Besides the even

more than usually brilliant envelope of thought in which Balzac never failed to enfold all he wrote, the *Curé de Tours* is well written. The composition is balanced within and without and so evenly that no one of the epigrams that light up the pages starts out of its setting or frets, or for one moment fatigues the eye. Here are a few :

Every fresh choice implies disdain for the object that has been refused.

If great things are simple to understand and easy to explain, little things demand an elaboration of detail.

Morality and political economy are opposed to the individual who consumes without producing, who holds a place without distributing good or evil ; for evil is but good, the results of which are not at once visible.

Nevertheless these trifles made up the sum of his entire life ; his dear life full of occupations in emptiness, full of emptiness in occupations ; a life colourless and grey, and where deep sentiments were pain, and the absence of emotion felicity.

Jealousy in Touraine, as is usually the case in provincial life, formed the substance of the language.

Celibates replace sentiments by habits.

If we do not always know where we are going, we always know the fatigues of the journey.

Out of this handful of maxims there are at least four that would hold their own against the best that could be found in La Rochefoucauld, and they were gathered almost at haphazard from a short story written in the space of a couple of nights, printed with others in one of the fifty volumes which form *The Human Comedy* !

After the *Curé de Tours* perhaps the most celebrated among the minor pieces is *Massimilla Doni*. Balzac himself held this story in the highest esteem, but it is disjointed and ill-proportioned ; and it may be that the musical criticism enabled him to overlook these faults. On the subject of digression we should be indulgent, if the digression be interesting or

valuable. But the eulogy of the *Moses in Egypt* shows no critical discernment, and an innocent notation of his own impressions would have been more interesting than crude technical praise of a work that has not stood the test of time ; to be quite plain, only the criticism of the craftsman is valid. A cabinet-maker will always know more about the leg of a table than a tailor or candlestick-maker.

It has been said that Balzac had not time to live ; it might be added that he had not time to think. Thoughts came to him intuitively, as the song comes to a bird, and it is not unlikely that one of the vulgarly seductive phrases of the *Moses* haunted his ear, and generated in his mind a scheme for a musical novel—the Israelites languishing in Egyptian captivity. . . . The modern equivalent ?—the Venetians under Austrian rule.

Emilio is a young Venetian whose whole fortune does not consist of more than sixty or seventy pounds a year ; he lives in the palace of his ancestors amid precious marbles and works of the highest art, no portion of which he may sell. He is in love with Massimilla Doni as Dante was in love with Beatrice, and one night, after an ecstatic evening, as he returns home in his gondola, he sees his palace decorated and lighted as if for a festival. Thinking that it is some surprise that Massimilla Doni is preparing for him, he asks no questions but seats himself at the supper table, which he finds spread with rare meats and wines. He eats and drinks so heartily that he immediately afterwards yields to an overpowering somnolence. Soon after a woman enters, a woman that reminded me of a fantastic English engraving invented for a forget-me-not, *une belle assemblée*, or a Book of Beauty. The Prince trembles with pleasure. His soul, his heart, his reason turn from the thought of any infidelity ; but the brutal and capricious infidelity dominate his soul. But the woman is not alone ; she is followed by a monster—a fearsome duke, Massimilla Doni's husband, a melomaniac, whose last pleasure is music. The lady with him is a great singer

upon whom he expends fortunes so that he may accompany her voice on the violin, for certain harmonies convulse him with delight. But it would be profitless to follow the story into its many circumlocutions, and tell how the great singer is persuaded to yield the young man to Massimilla Doni, and how Massimilla Doni is induced to descend from the palace of reserve and purity. The intrigue surely savours of comic opera. So beautiful a theme—a young man hesitating between the real and the ideal—should have been worked out on the simplest and most natural lines, and that the beauty of the theme survives the vulgarity of the treatment is the highest tribute we can pay to Balzac. *C'est du mauvais romantisme*, but the grip of Balzac is so intense that truth is transferred from reality to art. Balzac describes the monster :

Like that of Neapolitans the costume of the unknown consisted of five colours, if the black of the hat be admissible as a colour ; the trousers were olive, the red waistcoat glittered with gilded buttons, the coat verged upon green, and the linen inclined to yellow. This man seemed to have accepted the task of justifying the truth of the Neapolitan that Gerolamo always introduces into his theatre of marionettes. The eyes seemed to be of glass. The nose shaped like an ace of clubs was odiously prominent ; and it kindly covered a hole which it would be a libel upon man to call a mouth, and where showed three or four white tusks loose in their sockets, lapping one over the other. The ears drooped by their own weight, giving to this man an odd resemblance to a dog. The complexion, apparently containing several metals infused into the blood according to the prescription of some Hippocrates, verged upon black. The pointed forehead, badly hidden by flat, sparse hairs which fell like filaments of spun glass, crowned with red lumps a grotesquely comic face. Lastly, although thin and of ordinary height, this gentleman had long arms and broad shoulders ; but notwithstanding these deformities, and although you would have said he was seventy, he was not without a certain cyclopean majesty ; his manners

were aristocratic, and he had that air of security which belongs to the rich. For those whose stomachs were sufficiently strong to observe him, his story was written by passions upon a noble clay that had turned to mud. You would have divined the great lord, who, rich in his youth, had sold his body to Debauch at the price of excessive pleasures. Debauch had destroyed a human creature and made another to its purpose ; thousands of bottles had passed beneath the purple arches of that grotesque nose, leaving their lees upon the lips. Long and wasting indigestions had carried away the teeth. The eyes had faded in the light of gaming-tables. The blood was charged with impure principles which had exhausted the nervous system. The play of the digestive forces had absorbed intelligence. Love had scattered the brilliant tresses of the young man. Like a greedy inheritor, every vice had left its mark upon a still living corpse. When we observe Nature, we discover in her jests a very superior irony ; Nature had placed toads next to flowers, and in such wise was this duke near to this rose of love.

Le style c'est l'homme, is an old saw, one that has been repeated in and out of season, and my excuse for citing it is that perhaps no better exemplification of it could be found than Balzac were all literature ransacked for vindication of its truth. We see the giant in the description of the duke pushing forward in mad haste, crazed with ideas, impetuously fumbling for the right words, and finding expression at last. And to show Balzac as he is, I have translated word for word, preserving, as well as I knew how, every ungainly edge. He wrote well, magnificently when the inspiration was by him ; nobody was ever more continuously inspired, and he always had something to say, wherefore he revised to say more, never taking surreptitious pleasure in the art of writing, and his method, like every other, has advantages together with many disadvantages. Note how much better he is in the original French than he is or can ever be in translation, for in the original an association of ideas unites, or rather blends, the

words, as an effect of light blends the different parts of a landscape; this enveloping film is, of course, removed in translation, and I have preferred to leave the body naked rather than to weave for it a veil upon my own loom. This is but subterfuge; far better tell the truth about Balzac's style. It has been said that Balzac had not time to live; it might be added that Balzac had not time to *write*. He lived in ideas; ideas were always about him—ideas on all subjects; and writing was merely the operation of noting them down. In Balzac there is neither question of good style nor of bad style; he simply did not *write;* he registered his ideas, and his ideas are always so interesting that you read without noticing the ruts of verbal expression he slips into. It is not until we translate Balzac that we fully realise his deficiencies. For instance, the phrase I left untranslated in the description of the Chevalier de Valois, *En la patte d'oie caractéristique et les marches du palais se montraient ces rides élégantes, si prisées à la cour de Cythère. Patte d'oie* I always understood to be the French for crowsfeet; but it is hard to guess what he means by *les marches du palais;* and why in *les marches du palais se montraient ces rides élégantes, si prisées à la cour de Cythère.* And what I can explain still less is the fact that until we come to translate or to read very, *very* attentively, the page appears to us to be not only well but splendidly written.

Balzac lived in the midst of the romantic movement, and had his genius not been high and durable it would have succumbed and been lost in the romantic current in which so much genius was lost. But the realistic and critical method of which he was inventor and creator, lived too strongly in him, and the romance that swept about him only tended to purify and ventilate the abundance of his genius; it was the romantic movement that saved him from drifting among the mud-banks and shallow shores of Naturalism. Rembrandt, a romanticist at heart, lived in an age of plain realism, and for many a year strove to reconcile the principle which he individually represented with the spirit of the time he lived

in. I think he failed to do this in *Ronde de Nuit*, and I think he succeeded in that incomparable picture, *The Good Samaritan*, in the Louvre ; and in just the same way I think Balzac succeeded in reconciling two discordant principles in *Adieu*, *Séraphita*, *La Peau de Chagrin*, *Sarrasine*, and failed to do so in *Massimilla Doni* and *Une Ténébreuse Affaire*.

The Human Comedy is littered with stories, and every one, with the exception of *La Grenadière*, contains something noteworthy or wonderful, an incident or a character. The volume which contains *Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan* commences with *La Maison Nucingen*, and closes with a short tale, some half a dozen pages, called *Facino Cane*. Facino Cane, a Venetian nobleman, is, when the story opens, a poor blind musician who plays the flageolet at servants' weddings. But he was in his youth the hero of many an adventure. He was imprisoned in a Venice dungeon, whence by the aid of a broken dagger he dug his way through a wall, and all the while he was digging he saw the darkness full of gold and diamonds, for he is, according to his story, gifted by Nature with the faculty of seeing gold. He stops, he says now, before the jewellers' shops, and the yellow of the dear metal flows through the empty orbs to his brain. After many months' toil he reached the vaults in which the treasures of the Doges were concealed. Then he entered into a conspiracy with his gaolers, and escaped by the sea, carrying a great part of the treasure with him. I have no faintest notion as to the date of the first publication of *Monte Cristo*, but were I possessed of all the riches of the Doges, I would stake all, yea, and my life to boot, that *Monte Cristo* was published after 1836. That is the date of *Facino Cane*.

To secure great work two things, as Mr. Matthew Arnold said, are necessary—the man and the moment ; in other words, a man is great when all men are great. And Balzac lived when a concurrence of natural causes had combined to render France especially sensible to the reception of ideas. The Revolution had loosened the founts of human thought ;

Napoleon had passed like a wild dream through Europe ; the fields of conventionality were laid waste, religious, political, and literary, and once more the French mind had become a virgin soil ready to receive the seed. And was it not so in our own great literary epoch? The Reformation and the discovery of America enwombed Marlowe and Shakespeare, and the rivalry between Balzac and Shakespeare seems to be between verse and prose rather than between French and English genius. Balzac's empire is wider than Shakespeare's; his subjects are more numerous and his sovereignty not quite so secure. But between him and any other writer in prose fiction there is little comparison. On this point there can be no difference of opinion, and he spoke truly when he said: The world belongs to me because I understand it.

CHAP. IV

MAID. Mr. Freeman, sir.

FREEMAN. I am afraid I am interrupting.

MOORE. You are welcome to interrupt my reading. I am always willing to lay aside a book to talk.

FREEMAN. To anybody ?

MOORE. I prefer a man of wit ; but since I am confessing myself I will disclose all. I would lay aside the wisest book to talk to a stupid woman.

FREEMAN. Or man ?

MOORE. Yes ; or man, for I have lost my taste for reading, and there are few greater misfortunes. We cannot always be talking, we cannot always be at the theatre, we cannot always be listening to music or visiting exhibitions of pictures ; and to lose one's taste for reading is really like losing one's taste for bread.

FREEMAN. But I find you reading.

MOORE. Reading with a purpose, which is a very different

thing from reading for pleasure. I am reading one of George Eliot's novels.

FREEMAN. Reading George Eliot, and for a purpose! I should not have been surprised if I had found you reading Jane Austen or the Brontës, but *Daniel Deronda*!

MOORE. *Silas Marner*, the story I am reading, is less purposeful. Ah, if she had been less purposeful!

FREEMAN. Yet in spite of her purposes, which are manifold, you find something to admire?

MOORE. The book has only just come from the library. I am in the first pages and am surprised to find that she has a better conception of what a story should be than most English writers. Her first book, *Scenes from Clerical Life*, had one story in it that has haunted me ever since.

FREEMAN. You do not intend to write something like it?

MOORE. My dear Mr. Freeman!

FREEMAN. Forgive me. You intend to write an essay about her?

MOORE. An essay I must write about somebody, for I am short of copy. You remember that I withdrew *Impressions and Opinions* from the list of books that Liveright is publishing in America.

FREEMAN. Yes, and almost regretted your decision. Mr. Arthur Symons, your first critic, speaks of *Impressions and Opinions* as your best book.

MOORE. Arthur Symons speaks out of vague memories. If he were to open the book again he would see at once that it lacked unity of subject and language.

FREEMAN. Pater's definition of style: unity of subject, language, and something else. I have forgotten.

MOORE. So have I. In the 'eighties I collected much that I had written for various newspapers, for it seemed enough to flaunt ideas on all subjects.

FREEMAN. So the new book which will replace *Impressions and Opinions* will be a unity?

MOORE. To have made my meaning clear I should have said

that if we are artists we must spend our lives in a continual striving after perfection, though in so doing we lose something we have already won. You asked me if I am writing an essay. No; I am weary of essays, and I don't write them well; perhaps that's the reason why I am weary of them.

FREEMAN. And the name of the new book?

MOORE. *Conversations in Ebury Street.*

FREEMAN. Ah, I like the title. But why in Ebury Street? Why not simply *Conversations*? Too Landorian, and you would discriminate. Since Landor nobody has attempted conversations, and after the long interval it has come to you to revive a form in which criticism can be conducted more agreeably than in the essay.

MOORE. My admiration for Landor is without limit; I place him above Shakespeare, and to imitate him would be honour enough for me. But it was not Landor that prompted me to go and do likewise; the form rose out of what I had to say quite naturally. I was tempted, I know not why, but I was tempted to examine the novels that had come down to us from Defoe one after the other, to compare them to our poetry and to find them deficient in seriousness. This I could not do in an essay; the constant change of subject would have been irksome: to me at least it would have been. Of course, I might not have thought of the dialogue if I had not known Landor; and perhaps Landor would not have thought of the dialogue if he had not read Plato.

FREEMAN. Who is your interlocutor in the present instance?

MOORE. You are, as the manuscript on the table tells: MAID. *Mr. Freeman, sir.* FREEMAN. *I am afraid I am interrupting*——

FREEMAN. So you have begun the conversation?

MOORE. Yes; I have sketched some pages.

FREEMAN. Pray read them to me.

MOORE. The sheets on the table are only a beginning. I am at the stage of feeling my way into the subject, and the conversation may have already taken a wrong turn.

FREEMAN. So we discuss George Eliot together ?

MOORE. George Eliot and Mr. Thomas Hardy are contrasted, or will be, in the dialogue that I am meditating.

FREEMAN. They are contrasted in the *Confessions*, and very violently.

MOORE. Has it come to be held as a crime to do else than to voice public opinion ? to strike up with the little boy going down the street whistling gleefully in defiance of time and tune ?

FREEMAN. Public opinion changes slowly, but it changes. Lord Byron and George Eliot are examples of how public opinion sees black where it once saw white, and to find an example in our own time we have only to remember Tennyson. No doubt public opinion will change regarding Thomas Hardy, but I doubt the wisdom of treating the public like a whistling boy——

MOORE. Ordering his breeches to be taken down and you to hoist him ? Of course, if you don't like the subject I shall abandon it at once ; but will you tell me why ?

FREEMAN. It seems to me that I have already given a reason. But if you want another, here it is. You have just told me that you are willing always to lay aside a book to talk, a thing which you are doing now, forgetful that George Eliot is a voluminous writer, and of the length of *Middlemarch* which I think you will find difficult to finish before the winter. And then there is *Romola*, another long book.

MOORE. A book that I read at a time when I considered seriously the claims of Lord Leighton to be a great painter.

FREEMAN. He supplied the illustrations.

MOORE. And a better choice of an illustrator could not have been made. Both were workers in wax. *Daniel Deronda* I have never opened, and I shudder at the name of *Felix Holt*, a very leaden book that I stopped in the middle of long, long ago. You are quite right ; I shall not be able to re-read all George Eliot. But that is not a reason why I should abandon my subject. I have read George Eliot, and if I send the book

on the table back to the library at once I shall be able to speak to you out of my memories of her, which will be more agreeable than to read *Felix Holt* and ask you to dinner to argue about a defunct literature in which neither of us is in the least interested. So true is this that I am beginning to regret having opened the book on the table ; my mind is already taking a bias.

FREEMAN. In her favour ?

MOORE. Somewhat. You were going to ask me ?

FREEMAN. It was certainly in my mind to ask you if your memories of George Eliot are enough for the dialogue you propose to write.

MOORE. You have come from her writings later than I have. Be my examiner.

FREEMAN. Tell me about *Silas Marner*.

MOORE. *Silas Marner* is an old man, a miser, who discovers a foundling at his door, boy or girl, I have forgotten which. He must have heard the child cry and risen from his bed, for he found the child by the light of a lantern. I am sure of that ; I remember the lantern. Or am I inventing ?

FREEMAN. I see that you still keep some faint memory of the story.

MOORE. I can speak more precisely of some of the others.

FREEMAN. Of *Middlemarch* ?

MOORE. Of *Middlemarch* I remember the delight with which I read each volume, and there were six or eight in the edition that I came upon in my grandfather's library in Moore Hall when I was twelve or thirteen, mayhap fourteen. You may have caught sight of the portrait of an old gentleman on the wall of the lobby as you came upstairs—my grandfather the historian who in his preface to his history of the French Revolution (I give the preface in *Ave*), speaks with delightful resignation and humility of his failure to obtain recognition.

FREEMAN. Whosoever sees the portrait cannot but be attracted. A more characteristic portrait I have never seen.

MOORE. The portrait may be accepted as a commentary on

the little confession which his pen ran into without his knowing that he was telling his secret—wherefore an admirable confession. He stops short almost in the middle of a sentence, and I can see him in my thoughts staring at the lake, associating it in some dim way with his own loneliness.

FREEMAN. Was the manuscript lost ?

MOORE. Nothing was saved.

FREEMAN. I am sorry I did not see Moore Hall before I wrote my book.

MOORE. For no reason, at least for none that we can discover, some places are fixed deeper in our memories than others and become with time more real than the realities we live among. My grandfather's library is one of these spiritual realities, and with what strange intensity do I see the old gentleman's portrait over the chimney-piece, the wire-netted book-cases, the round lake, the telescope, the view of the lake winding sadly mile after mile by low shores. And the hours that I spent reading *Middlemarch* can be recalled at will, and none more easily than the moment of disappointment when I returned the book to the shelves.

FREEMAN. Every man remembers his first intimations that life is not permanent. You read *Middlemarch*——

MOORE. My memories of *Adam Bede* are more explicit, and I can still hear the tone of the young squire's words when the parson tries to dissuade him—from what, I have forgotten ; probably from walking out with Hetty ; and I can recall how the story lost its humanity for me when the dairy-maid was taken by the police and tried for murder of her child, for the story of a crime is never a good story. Some years ago I read *The Mill on the Floss*, a well-modulated narrative, with the aunts of Maggie Tulliver, each in her house, and her habits, and Maggie Tulliver going to meet a cripple or a hunchback in a pine wood. A delightful, intellectual companionship this was, one that George Eliot's readers thought should continue and end in marriage ; but George Eliot knew better than her readers how life was made, and she chose that

Maggie's bodily instincts should be awakened by a commonplace young man, who takes her away somewhere in a boat or a barge; I have forgotten which, but remember very well my delight when the young man seized Maggie's bare arm and kissed it, a very natural act, one which a girl would expect who was eloping with a young man, and my stifled disappointment when Maggie returned home despite the young man's apologies, tears and promises of amendment.

FREEMAN. You remember the flood, with Maggie and Tom Tulliver in a boat?

MOORE. Yes, and I have nothing to say against the end; it's harmless, it's almost good. But I am thinking now of the passing of all this literature, as well built as the mill itself, for George Eliot constructed well and solidly; her prose is rich and well balanced. But these qualities were not enough to save her from the whirling, bubbling flood of Time; her books have gone down like the mill. Lighter things have floated; hers have sunk out of sight; and I would see a reason for the sudden overthrow of one who in her day was looked upon as almost Shakespeare's equal.

FREEMAN. You have known more old Victorians than I have, but I doubt——

MOORE. Doubt not, for I heard Professor Tyrrel, a great scholar, whose Latin and Greek verse was as perfect as such things can be, speak the words that you have just heard me speak: Almost Shakespeare's equal!

FREEMAN. Whereby we may deduce the moral that learning is insufficient.

MOORE. We may, indeed. But I would look into the soul and see why this woman's mind has passed into a dust hardly less anonymous than her body's.

FREEMAN. The bent of her mind was towards philosophy rather than imaginative literature.

MOORE. And it was George Henry Lewes who drew her attention to prose narrative as an outlet for her genius. Even genius is dependent on accident. The accident is

always going by ; talent misses it, but genius avails itself of it instantly, and George Eliot availed herself of her chance. But that is a side issue ; we are seeking the reason why she should have passed into such sudden oblivion whilst others, the Brontës, should remain.

FREEMAN. You admit that her prose is rich and well balanced, and I agree with you. But there is no pleasure in it.

MOORE. You are quite right ; there is very little pleasure in it. But why is there no pleasure in it ?

FREEMAN. Something in her character, perhaps.

MOORE. Let us then seek her failure in her character. I know she met George Henry Lewes and that is about all I do know of her. Whence came she ? Was she a townswoman or a countrywoman ? Did she come from the north or the south or the east or the west ? Whom did she know before she met Lewes ? Was he her first lover, her second, her third ? Tell me all you know about her.

FREEMAN. Her name was Marian Evans, and she came from Warwickshire.

MOORE. From the middle of England, like Shakespeare. Balzac, too, came from the middle of France.

FREEMAN. Her father was a land agent to Mr. Francis Newdigate, a Warwickshire squire.

MOORE. And she was sent to school. But to what school ?

FREEMAN. That I can't tell you, but without doubt to some school in the neighbourhood, perhaps in Warwick. Do you know Warwick ?

MOORE. Yes. In my boyhood Warwick was a lovely old English town full of gardens and gables, and associated with the Middle Ages—Warwick Castle, with a bad picture of a man in a cave shown to travelling folk, the very town in which there would be a fine, large, handsome school for young ladies. Birmingham is over the border, but not more than twenty miles away, and she may have been educated in Birmingham.

FREEMAN. I can but tell you that at her mother's death she

was recalled from school to look after her father's house. I have always heard that the change was welcomed by her, for even in her teens she resented direction in her studies. At Arbury Farm she applied herself to the French and Italian languages, and I think music was a hobby of hers.

MOORE. I shouldn't have suspected music from her writing. But Nature is ever capricious. Tell me more.

FREEMAN. At Arbury Farm she refused to go to church and nearly quarrelled with her father, and afterwards she began to write for the *Westminster Review*.

MOORE. I am beginning to understand. And after the publication of two or three articles the editor wrote asking her to call at the office when she came to London ; and in London she made the acquaintance of John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, the inevitable Harriet Martineau and the desirable George Henry. Can you give me the date when she left Arbury Farm ?

FREEMAN. I will inquire the matter out in the library.

MOORE. I am beginning to understand. She came up to London to participate in the discovery that pleasure was a mistake, almost a vulgarity, and to hear the beautiful eighteenth century spoken of as the mischievous and shameful century. We have always been under the domination of France, spiritually, and having worshipped beauty must needs follow France into ugliness. I would tell you who began the new cult if I could ; there must have been somebody before Courbet, who spoke about truth of effect and local colour. Be this as it may, he was committed to it, and Troyon still more so, and these were followed by Millet, who took it upon himself to explain the miserable lot of the peasant; and whosoever saw it, remembers *L'Homme à la Houe*, a detestable object, but which so stirred the loose bowels of compassion that the very world was certain something must be done to relieve the monotony of the peasant's lot. Philanthropy and realism entered into art arm in arm ; and it is believed that Rosa Bonheur never wore a crinoline, preferring

to walk about in breeches and a blouse. She wore clogs and led a life more laborious than that of the cart-horses she painted. Rosa Bonheur—how well the name goes with her pictures! The syllables tramp just like the great grey cart-horse that the peasant rides into the middle of the fair. Rosa Bonheur—was there ever a more cynical name? She only just escaped Rose. Rose Bonheur—a woman in whose life a rose never flourished, and who repudiated happiness! Do tell me, and quickly, when Marian Evans changed her name to *George Eliot*.

FREEMAN. But you do not believe that the character of a human being is modified by a name, inherited or assumed? You said just now that Rosa Bonheur's name was in direct contradiction to her character.

MOORE. The name tramps like a cart-horse, and I cannot believe she would have painted the same pictures if her name had been plain Rose. But Rosa Bonheur is a side issue; we are speaking of George Eliot. Tell me when she changed the name of Marian Evans, a splendid name, and how well it goes with Arbury Farm! I can see myself in my imagination directing an envelope: Miss Marian Evans, Arbury Farm, Warwickshire. Can you tell me when she changed her name?

FREEMAN. I have no exact information. Have you an encyclopaedia?

MOORE. An encyclopaedia in this house! No.

FREEMAN. We may assume for the moment that her first book, the translation of Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, was published under the name of *George Eliot*.

MOORE. Why should we assume that?

FREEMAN. I have told you that her father was much distressed by her refusal to go to church——

MOORE. Had I been her father, I should have said: Marian, I will allow you to omit church if in return you will choose some other name than *George Eliot*.

FREEMAN. What name would you suggest to her?

MOORE. *Oliver Brunskill.*

FREEMAN. There's not much beauty in that name.

MOORE. We mustn't seek beauty in names—character. Do you think my writings would have been the same if I had adopted *Annie Grey* as my pseudonym? George Henry Lewes, her guide and bugle-call (it was he who first suggested that she turn her hand to fiction), should have said, when they were debating the pseudonym necessary for *Scenes from Clerical Life*: I do not urge you, Marian, to choose *Annie Grey*—indeed, I urge you not to choose it; and we can imagine Marian answering: But why, dear George, are you averse from the name *George Eliot*? It is so uncompromising.

FREEMAN. And what answer would you set down for George Henry Lewes?

MOORE. A name too faintly genteel for you, Marian. The phrase might have risen up in his mind *as genteel as an omnibus,* but he would not have spoken it, and continued: Hardly a man's name, hardly a woman's, without any sex on it. The word *sex* would have frightened Marian, and she would have answered that the name was chosen before she knew him as a suitable name to go on the title page of a translation of Strauss's *Life of Jesus.* But why continue it? George Henry would have interposed. *Scenes from Clerical Life,* by Marian Evans, to which Marian would have answered drily: I have to consider my father.

FREEMAN. I do not know if the translation was made at Arbury Farm or when she went to London.

MOORE. It can't be helped. In London she adopted the morality of her circle: morality without God, a fantastic theory if ever there was one. Even with God's help men and women stray into the primrose path; how then can we expect them to remain in the strait and narrow way if there be no promise of reward or punishment? an altogether impracticable morality, as is proved indeed by Marian herself who went to live with a married man and wrote under his roof *Scenes from Clerical Life* and other admonitory works, thereby

hanging herself out like a banner from the roof on which is inscribed the magic word : Excelsior !

FREEMAN. Lewes was her single transgression from the moral law.

MOORE. Our information on the subject is too slight to warrant literary investigation, and further transgressions, could they be proved against her, would weaken my argument.

FREEMAN. You think then that the foundations of her style are to be discovered in Lewes ?

MOORE. Not in Lewes's writing, but in the double life she was leading.

FREEMAN. You trace George Eliot's style to a conflict between theory and conduct, and I think you are on surer ground now than you were in that fantastic theory that the name we bring into the world or that we assume is accountable for all our acts and thoughts.

MOORE. Encouraged by your sympathy I will venture a little further into a theology which some will regard as casuistical, saying that if she had transgressed oftener her style would no longer be the same. You see, she may have gone to live with Lewes for doctrinal reasons (indeed, it almost looks as if she had), false reasons, of course. But if further transgressions could be urged against her we might assume that she was pursuing happiness, and happiness being in her mind would have found an outlet in her works. You see, my dear Mr. Freeman, a woman who transgresses frequently, escapes the Christian conscience, and we acquit her of the sin against the Holy Ghost, a sin that the Pagan and the Christian worlds look upon with equal detestation. I flatter myself that I stand shoulder to shoulder with Canterbury in all that concerns this sin, except its unforgivable nature.

FREEMAN. If a man or a woman cannot accept Christian doctrine you would advocate that he or she should lead a licentious life, escaping thereby from setting a bad example ?

MOORE. I would not have you fall into the makeshift

argument of the preacher, who would have us look upon Antiquity as a degrading past of which the least said the better.

FREEMAN. Antiquity affords the highest instances of morality.

MOORE. As I have said, Antiquity and Christianity hold one sin in equal detestation and I think I am guilty of no paradox if I say that her style is the outcome of the moral conflict in which she found herself involved ; but redeemed by Paganism or by Christianity (if there be redemption in the Christian creed for the soul guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost), she might have written—well it's impossible to say how she might have written, but certainly more delightfully than she has written.

FREEMAN. You would distinguish between a moral man and a moralist, and I think you are right. And I would add that the moralist is seldom happy.

MOORE. If she had been a happy woman her happiness would have crept into her writings, as I have said, for what is in the mind finds its way on to the page, an almost needless amplification of your criticism that the moralist is seldom happy. Indeed, an essay might be written by some philosopher, poet, painter and critic, who would discern in Velazquez an icy spirit who saw no more in his fellows than subjects for portraits or pictures. The critic of whom I am thinking would cry, on turning from Velazquez to Rubens : A happy man ! His paintings tell the tale. He meditated no doctrine, and to be free accepted Catholicism outwardly, thereby getting his freedom to wander among nymphs and satyrs without receiving reproofs from Spain. Among modern writers your enemy Stevenson——

FREEMAN. My enemy ? No. If, as some people think, I have criticised Stevenson harshly it is because he seems to be taking a place in public estimation higher than he deserves, getting a great deal that was due to Pater. Moreover, the happiness that he expressed seems to me a very superficial

kind of happiness ; the cudgelling of a little donkey in the Cevennes !

MOORE. At once you bring in a morality which casts a gloom upon the radiant pages of *Travels with a Donkey*.

FREEMAN. He did not keep religion out of his writings ; he remained a sour Protestant. He could not visit the monks without commenting, and adversely, on the mode of life they chose to adopt, and in the *Inland Voyage* he is also ready to advance the claims of Protestantism against those of Rome ; and in his essay on Villon he never ceases to thank God that he was not himself like Villon. No ; I think you would have done better to have left Stevenson out of this argument. Morris would have supplied you with a better example, for men fight and love and wander in his poems as they do in Homer.

MOORE. The visible world was enough for the Greek and the English poet, and all that you say in praise of Morris I will applaud, hat in hand. A greater poet than Stevenson, I grant you ; still—— Let us not wrangle, however, but agree that ancient literature was happier than modern. Homer's fighting, though heavy-handed, is always light-hearted. The wanderings of Odysseus are untouched by melancholy, and Virgil, too, and Horace are free from this bane.

FREEMAN. Your chronicle runs too fast, for we have come to imperial Rome, overlooking Sicily.

MOORE. Yes ; you are quite right. I had forgotten Sicily, and thank you for reminding me. How the very name of Theocritus brings up before our eyes sunny hill-sides, with shepherds gathered under tamarisk trees, and for single ornament a torrent dashing over the face of the high rock. More real, more true are these than George Eliot's Norfolk hinds. The shepherds and shepherdesses have come down to us from more than two thousand years, gaining in every generation, it would seem, a new and more intense life. Battus is clearer to us now than he was, perhaps, to his

creator, certainly more real than Tom Tulliver is to me, or his sister Maggie. And the incident of the thorn that Corydon plucked from Battus's foot under the ankle we would not exchange for the story of the flood.

FREEMAN. I would certainly not give up Amaryllis for Maggie Tulliver.

MOORE. All her walks with the cripple in the pine wood are not worth the verses in which we read that Battus goes to Amaryllis's cave to plead his love, saying that if she refuses him he will die at her feet. He says some lovely things to her: *Lo, ten apples I bring thee, plucked from that very place where thou didst bid me pluck them, and others to-morrow I will bring thee. Ah, regard my heart's deep sorrow! ah, would I were that humming bee, and to thy cave might come dipping beneath the fern that hides thee, and the ivy leaves!*

FREEMAN. In such words as these we reach immortality.

MOORE. *Ah, lovely as thou art to look upon, ah, heart of stone, ah, dark-browed maiden, embrace me, thy true goatherd, that I may kiss thee, and even in empty kisses there is a sweet delight!* In the simple words *even in empty kisses there is a sweet delight*, he reaches to the very heart of the sensual instinct. The unfortunate goatherd continues to plead, but for the moment I am at the end of my memories.

FREEMAN. Theocritus records not the answers of Amaryllis; not a word do we hear her speak. And in the next Idyl Battus and Corydon, two neatherds, meet, and after some random banter their talk turns on the death of Amaryllis.

MOORE. *Ah, gracious Amaryllis! Thee alone even in death will we ne'er forget. Dear to me as my goats wert thou, and thou art dead! Alas, too cruel a spirit hath my lot in his keeping.* That is all we know of Amaryllis, and the scene of this great love grief is described in an anecdote—the plucking out of a thorn that has run into Battus's foot under the ankle. Battus's sighs for Amaryllis were the first, but they were not the last. The world has continued ever since to sigh for Amaryllis. Is it her name that has given her an immortality

that has endured for more than two thousand years? and given immortality to a hind like Battus? for we like him when he says: *I will sing no more, but dead will I lie where I fall, and here may the wolves devour me.* This rough goatherd was a true lover. Why are these hinds and shepherdesses immortal, Mr. Freeman? Why are they real? Why are they enough? Because his Idyls tell of happy days and men and women who lead happy lives, following their flocks and their instincts. It would be hard to find an unhappy day in his pages, not even when two fishermen wake up in their broken hut with nothing before them but another toilsome day in search of food, two old men at the end of their lives who will soon be unable to put forth again. Theocritus brings into his story a dream. Tell me, says one old man, the vision of the night; nay, tell all to thy friend. And the fisherman tells of the dream in which he hooked a fish with golden scales, and the great difficulty he had to bring it on shore. You remember?

FREEMAN. Yes; and the answer to forget the dream and *seek the fish of flesh, lest thou die of famine with all thy dreams of gold!*

MOORE. Even the genius of Wordsworth could not redeem him from the curse of morality, and had we to choose between *The Leech-gatherer* and the fisherman, we should choose the earlier story.

FREEMAN. You can usually give reasons for your preferences.

MOORE. Happy days are remembered always; moralities are doleful. I had a subject—— But you were going to say?

FREEMAN. I was going to remind you of a story in verse by George Eliot of a girl who loved a king, and who for the king's sake refused to marry her lover; but the king, hearing of her broken faith, sent for her and kept her in his court till she began to perceive that he was only a man like another——

MOORE. And the Victorian returns the poor girl to her betrothed, attired in all the prejudices and conventions of 1860. How very admirable!

FREEMAN. You don't think that the intimacy of the king would have checked the girl's admiration of him and turned it back to its source, the young man she had discarded ?

MOORE. Not unless the king had possessed himself of the girl's affections and wearied of them ; then, of course, she might have picked up the thread she had dropped.

FREEMAN. Is not your view very cynical ?

MOORE. George Eliot's view is the cynical : the robbing a girl of her illusions and the imposition instead of Christian conventions. Ah ! here is Mabel bringing in the tea. You'll stay and have a cup of tea with me, won't you ?

CHAP. V

MOORE. You will have another cup ?

FREEMAN. No, thank you.

MOORE. A cigar ?

FREEMAN. No, thank you ; I don't smoke.

MOORE. Not even a cigarette ?

FREEMAN. No, thank you.

MOORE. So you like Mr. Hardy's poems better than his novels ?

FREEMAN. Yes ; I think he writes verse better than prose, occasionally somewhat awkwardly ; but in both, in verse and prose, he has helped the ordinary man to realise pessimism as a theory of life.

MOORE. But pessimism as a theory is as old as the world. To go no further back than *Ecclesiastes*, we find not a few admirable phrases depicting the worthlessness of life ; and in Shakespeare we find phrases even more beautiful. If you had said that Mr. Hardy popularised pessimism and coaxed his readers into drinking from an old tin pot a beverage that had hitherto only been offered to them in golden and jewelled goblets, I should have agreed with you. You were speaking

just now of Mr. Hardy's stories in verse. I have read one of these, and as an example of how to make pessimism seem trivial I think it would be difficult to find a better story than the one telling of a dead woman's dog that cannot be persuaded to leave her grave, and how disappointed all the family are when they discover that he is not trying to scratch up his dead mistress but a bone that he has buried.

FREEMAN. You have not chosen a happy example of Mr. Hardy's art. I could show you some poems that I think even you would find some merit in. I remember that in speaking of a certain Irish writer you say he is sufficiently a poet to become a great prose writer.

MOORE. The best prose is usually written by poets—Shakespeare wrote the best seventeenth-century, and Shelley the best nineteenth ; and I do not think I am going too far when I say that Mr. Hardy has written the worst. I will hear your protest afterwards. Allow me to read :

The persistent torrent from the gurgoyle's jaws directed all its vengeance into the grave. The rich tawny mould was stirred into motion, and boiled like chocolate. The water accumulated and washed deeper down, and the roar of the pool thus formed spread into the night as the head and chief among other noises of the kind created by the deluging rain. The flowers so carefully planted by Fanny's repentant lover began to move and writhe in their beds. The winter violets turned slowly upside down and became a mere mat of mud. Soon the snowdrop and other bulbs danced in the boiling mass like ingredients in a cauldron. Plants of the tufted species were loosened, rose to the surface, and floated off.

. . . The pool upon the grave had soaked away into the ground, and in its place was a hollow. The disturbed earth was washed away over the grass and pathway in the guise of the brown mud he had already seen, and it spotted the marble tombstone with the same stains. Nearly all the flowers were washed clean out of the ground, and they lay,

roots upwards, on the spots whither they had been splashed by the stream.

FREEMAN. From what book are you reading ?

MOORE. *Far from the Madding Crowd.*

FREEMAN. One of his best books.

MOORE. Then I have done him no injustice in quoting from it. The gargoyle may direct its vengeance, but not the torrent.

FREEMAN. Would you mind reading the sentence again ?

MOORE. *The persistent torrent from the gurgoyle's jaws directed all its vengeance into the grave.*

FREEMAN. I suppose you are right.

MOORE. *The rich tawny mould was stirred into motion, and boiled like chocolate.* Can that image be defended ?

FREEMAN. Nobody seeks to defend it.

MOORE. A pool does not roar, and flowers do not writhe, and when Mr. Hardy tells us that the violets turned slowly upside down, my thoughts are directed to ducks in a pond, despite the fact that ducks turn quickly upside down. *Soon the snowdrop and other bulbs danced in the boiling mass like ingredients in a cauldron.* Is a cauldron the image that would rise up in the mind of a poet, and would he use the word *ingredients* ? *Nearly all the flowers were washed clean* (sic) *out of the ground, and they lay, roots upwards, on the spots whither they had been splashed by the stream.* You appreciate the *whither*, I hope ?

FREEMAN. An ill-managed phrase, truly.

MOORE. Good writers do not usually botch and bungle up every line, and of all, when they are attempting a purple passage.

FREEMAN. Do you think that he chose Fanny Robin's grave as suitable for fine writing ?

MOORE. Had there not been purple in his eye, he would have written : The pour of water from the gargoyle washed away the grave-mound. A simple statement was all that was needed, and perhaps the very first among our literary

instincts is the one that tells us the theme that may be developed and the theme that offers no opportunities for development.

FREEMAN. It would be difficult to say more with advantage than that the rain water pouring from the gargoyle's jaws washed away the grave-mound. But if you wish to exhibit Mr. Hardy's novels as no better than the novels the Press has for many years singled out as subjects for ridicule, you will have to show something more than that Mr. Hardy is no master of words, which is pretty generally admitted, I think, in the daily and weekly Press.

MOORE. Our critics have been on many occasions nearly fluttered out of their enthusiasms by Mr. Hardy's lack of style, but they have always neglected to tell us the qualities that led them astray.

FREEMAN. If you do not like *Far from the Madding Crowd* I am afraid you will not like *The Trumpet Major*, and I doubt if your patience will bear you to the end of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. It begins well, but half-way through——

MOORE. I do not propose to read *Daniel Deronda*, and neither do I propose to read all Mr. Hardy's novels, for has it not been said that to have eaten a crust of bread is to have tasted of all the stars ? I have read *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and my doubts began when Alec came riding by and called her to jump up behind him. We are told that he rode into a wood. Now, a wood may be large or small ; it may wander hither and thither, or grow in patches. A wood may be dense, dark, solemn, forbidding, or it may be blithe, enticing, with delightful interspaces ; it may be overgrown with scrub, littered with uncouth rocks, or it may be smooth. A wood may have the wet, close smell of an ancient marsh, or it may be fragrant as a garden.

FREEMAN. It was not the wood that mattered, but Tess, and a long description——

MOORE. A wood may be described in two words. When Scott wrote : *Land of brown heath and shaggy wood*, we are

in Scotland. But the woods and fields that Mr. Hardy speaks of are never before our eyes. I think he tells us that Alec rode some distance into the wood and made a couch for Tess in the dead leaves. He buttons his overcoat round her shoulders and goes away for a little while, and returns to find her asleep. The situation is one which seems to Mr. Hardy opportune for a meditation, wherefore he begins :

But some might say, where was Tess's guardian angel ? where was the providence of her simple faith ? Perhaps, like that other god of whom the ironical Tishbite spoke, he was talking, or he was pursuing, or he was in a journey, or he was sleeping and not to be awaked. Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive—a sentence, Mr. Freeman, which as a poet you cannot but admire. The French have a good word for this kind of story : *coco*, and *coco* may be translated into English as *Mother Goose*. After the incident in the wood Tess returns to her home, and about a year afterwards we read of her in a cornfield with a baby, who is taken ill and whom she baptises herself in the middle of the night. When the baby dies Tess continues to work in her parents' house, and then becomes a dairymaid ; and in the dairy she meets Angel Clare, whom she marries, without, however, telling him that she has had a baby. But on the night of the wedding she makes up her mind to confess everything to him, and is glad when Angel Clare confides to her the fact that he had once *plunged into eight and forty hours' dissipation with a stranger*, and that he has *never repeated the offence*. You will see, Mr. Freeman, that the interest of the story concentrates not so much on Tess's confession but on the character the author gives to the confession, for, like a wood, a confession can take every kind of shape. George Eliot would have said to herself : Angel Clare may persuade her to confess ; he may be anxious to know the truth for pure motives, or he may be anxious to

know the truth for impure motives ; he may be willing to hear, and then unwilling to hear. George Eliot's more fertile imagination would certainly have chosen one of these motives to develop, and if Mr. Hardy shrank from the essential we can but conclude that it was lack of invention, brain paralysis, something of the sort, that caused his abrupt retreat into the past indefinite :

And pressing her forehead against his temple she entered on the story of her acquaintance with Alec D'Urberville and its results, murmuring the words without flinching, and with her eyelids drooping down.

FREEMAN. You are of the kind opinion, Mr. Moore, that if a man loves a woman he would just ask her : Is it all over ? And if she told him that it was, he would say : Well, don't let's speak about this any more. You have repented of your sin, and I have repented of mine.

MOORE. I should prefer even that to the past indefinite at the very moment when soul-revealing words were needed. I am sure that any of the writers about whom the Press is so constantly contemptuous would have devised something better than : *Pressing her forehead against his temple she entered on the story of her acquaintance with Alec D'Urberville and its results.*

Angel Clare is given to walking in his sleep, and one night picking Tess out of her bed he carries her quite a long way—if my memory does not trip me, several hundred yards, crossing the river by means of a narrow plank. What I am going to say seems incredible, but I remember certainly something about an Abbey and a stone coffin, in which he lays Tess. I have forgotten for how long she lies in the coffin, but remember that she takes her sleep-walking husband by the arm and leads him home. As I read how they approached the house, I said to myself : We are coming to something more original than a wedding-night parting due to a confession. He will put Tess into his own bed, and on awakening he will take her into his arms—a daring piece

of craftsmanship ! and my mind softened towards Mr. Hardy. But only for a moment, alas, for Tess persuades Angel Clare to lie down on his bed and retires to her own room. The episode, therefore, means nothing, for next morning they drive a little way together and part, and henceforth we see her getting her living as best she can in the fields.

FREEMAN. You admit that we do see Tess at work in the turnip fields.

MOORE. A solitary figure in a turnip field is a distinct feature in the landscape, and Mr. Hardy did not miss it ; indeed, we could almost wish that he had, so often have we seen this figure in pictures, as often, or very nearly as often, as we have seen harvesters returning with a dancing step from the fields, scythes over their shoulders and a moon three times too big behind their heads.

FREEMAN. You are thinking, surely, of George Mason's picture of harvesters ?

MOORE. Perhaps I am ; it would not surprise me if the picture you speak of got mixed up in my memories of *Tess*, so entirely in keeping are the dancing harvesters and the moon three times too big with the seducer, who returns in clerical garb and disappears from the story, returning again for Tess to murder him with a carving knife and the blood to soak through the ceiling, and for Tess to be hanged later on, after spending a splendid honeymoon among the monoliths of Stonehenge, with Angel Clare waiting outside the prison to see the black flag run up.

FREEMAN. Have you ever seen any plays by Mr. Henry Arthur Jones ?

MOORE. Yes ; I have seen a good many.

FREEMAN. You know what Oscar Wilde's advice to dramatists was ? He said that there were three rules to be observed ; the first rule was not to write like Mr. Henry Arthur Jones.

MOORE. And what were the second and third rules ?

FREEMAN. They were the same as the first. And if you

were called upon to give advice to young novelists, you would adopt Oscar Wilde's formula.

MOORE. The two men are curiously alike, and the physical likeness is as striking as the mental. William Archer once asked me if I had ever seen Mr. Hardy. I said that I hadn't, and he answered: Well, you'd be surprised at the likeness, the physical likeness: same height, same build, same type of face, same complexion. And it so happened that a few days afterwards Mr. Hardy was pointed out to me going round the pictures with his wife, and I said: Archer is right; the two men are very like each other.

FREEMAN. The subject of your charge is that Mr. Hardy is often melodramatic; but I don't think any of his admirers would deny that he does, on occasion, avail himself of exaggeration, and in his defence they would speak of the three witches in *Macbeth*, of the two murders interrupted by the comic porter, of Banquo's ghost, and many other melodramatic scenes. Nor would their inquiry be limited to *Macbeth*. *Hamlet* rises frequently into melodrama, or, as you would put it, lapses frequently into melodrama. It seems to me that you are bringing into this criticism a great deal of your own temperament. You don't like melodrama, and you are right not to like it, for whenever you get an effect it is by understatement rather than by overstatement; but that is not a reason why you should condemn a method which is employed by both Mr. Hardy and Shakespeare.

MOORE. The charge is often brought against the critic that his admonitions are no more than a reflection of his own temperament. Of course, since all he sees, hears, feels, and knows, is but a reflection of his temperament. Like his author, he speaks out of himself. But I think my best answer to your defence of melodrama is that there is melodrama that rises into the empyrean, and melodrama unredeemed by poetry. The first walks with divine gait, in silken raiment and with stars in her hair, whilst the other proceeds with shambling gait from ale-house to ale-house, shouting stories

in broken English out of her husky throat of murder, arson, robbery, rape, and vengeance. Shakespeare appeals to all the senses, it is true, but he never fails to appeal to the mind. Macbeth's deeds and Hamlet's are transported into art, and are therefore only understood by the few, though they may be undoubtedly relished by the many.

FREEMAN. You remind me now of Don Quixote charging the windmills, mills that only exist in his imagination. Nobody compares *Tess* and *Jude the Obscure* with *Hamlet* or *Macbeth.*

MOORE. Oh, yes, they do ! Several articles have appeared in which analogies are discovered between *Jude the Obscure* and *Prometheus Bound*, and I would not advise any critic who valued the world's opinions to challenge these appreciations.

FREEMAN. I certainly hope that you do not speak to others as openly as you do to me.

MOORE. You would not like, then, truth to prevail ?

FREEMAN. Like Pilate, I ask you : What is truth ? Your judgment is at variance with opinions that proceed from the highest to the lowest. Everybody believes——

MOORE. The entire Press believes, and would shed the last drop of its ink in defence of the literary opinions of the many.

FREEMAN. You would then set aside the literary opinions of the many ? Even that of your friend, Mr. Edmund Gosse, who salutes Mr. Hardy as *the poet who is, without dispute, the head of the literary profession, and so I believe the first of living men of letters in the world ?*

MOORE. Mr. Gosse speaks out of his lights, and I speak out of mine, and I do not think that anything would be gained by my decrying his as a false light and mine as a true. A great deal of what I am saying, Mr. Freeman, will appear in print as soon as Mr. Hardy steps on board Charon's boat.

FREEMAN. You think that others share your opinions and are probably at this moment anxious to utter them, but refrain. . . .

MOORE. Lest truth should appear to many as bad taste. But I would think only of how he may be saved from invidious familiarity when he advances to meet our God, for never having known him on earth he may, when he steps from Charon's boat, ask the God to point out his (Mr. Hardy's) seat to him ; or it may be that he will seek his seat himself, and not finding it next to Shakespeare or Æschylus, he will return and complain to Apollo, who will ask : Who is this one ? A messenger will answer : This is Hardy, the author of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. And the author of these absurd works, the God will reply, would place himself next to Æschylus and Shakespeare ! The messenger will answer : he has listened long to the quackers that beset the shallows of mortality. All the same, let him be hurled into the hollows we have reserved for—and the God will quote three names which I am not called upon to transcribe.

CHAP. VI

Any crude emotion will do if it be vague, loud, and sprawling ; restraint, once the watchword, repels, and the night that Mr. Desmond MacCarthy came to me with a copy of *Avowals* under his arm, I checked the question : How do you reconcile your appreciations of my writings with your worship of Mr. Hardy ? and listened in silence till he came to two brief passages so very Landorian that for a moment I thought they must be altered. But Mr. MacCarthy prayed me to retain them, saying : They will bear witness to your worship of the Master, and being of one mind on this subject, we fell to talking of *Pericles and Aspasia*, agreeing, of course, that it must be looked upon as the noblest work in the English language. I gave all my attention, but whilst praising Landor I did not fail to notice that his fingers played with a book unrecognisable as a volume of the *Imaginary Conversations*,

and it seeming to me that his thoughts were straying from Landor, I was moved at last to ask for the name of the book under his hand. He answered : *A Group of Noble Dames*, by Thomas Hardy. My face certainly clouded, but undismayed he said he had brought the volume for me to read and in the conviction that it would convert me. Would I read one story ? One would be enough, he assured me, and his solicitude for my literary welfare was so touching that I agreed to read the story which he had been kind enough to mark. And as it appeared to me even stranger in style and composition than the novels, I wrote to ask if he was putting a joke upon me, and received in reply a long, pathetic letter, the contents of which have completely passed out of my mind.

The next thing I heard about Mr. Hardy was from Mr. Freeman, who wrote to tell me that he had talked my doubts over with Mr. De La Mare, and that he and Mr. De La Mare would be pleased to dine with me any day next week that suited my convenience. To explain my obtuseness to me, I said, and wrote mentioning Tuesday ; and satisfied that on Tuesday night the great mystery would be solved, I fell to thinking on what I should give them to eat : for the fare must not be spoilt by a wrangle in the drawing-room before dinner, nor in the dining-room whilst we are eating and drinking. A lighter conversation than Mr. Hardy's grammar must be insisted upon, and when my guests arrived I drew their attention to the pictures on the walls, and when we went downstairs to the dining-room I tried to interest them in the differences between shad and bass, saying how sorry I was not to be able to offer them a shad, or bass, or grey mullet, all these fishes being kept out of the market maliciously by the fishmongers.

A salmon trout followed the soup, and it was then that I began to notice that Mr. De La Mare's attention was not fixed on his plate. He is thinking, I said to myself, of Mr. Hardy. The atmosphere of my dining-room is already Dorset ; the name will be spoken in a moment. It was, and

to such purpose that my guests ate and drank without tasting; an excellent Barsac was, speaking figuratively, turned to water by *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. We will have coffee in the drawing-room, I said, and followed them upstairs a little disheartened, feeling that facts are of no avail against established reputations. Wherefore as soon as the coffee cups were taken from the room, I said: I think I'd like to tell you a story, and they agreeing, I began:

Once on a time there was a young man called Lord Uplandtowers. Uplandtowers! repeated one of my guests (I think it was Mr. Freeman), who asked if I had made up my mind that the retention of so strange a name was essential to the story. Lord Uplandtowers, I answered testily, as if the story were my own, was brooding a marriage with Barbara, the daughter of his neighbour, Sir John Grebe, of Chene Manor, and so beset was he with thoughts of her that he confided his design one night to a guest, but the guest could not encourage his lordship's hopes. We shall see, returned Lord Uplandtowers impassively, and it suddenly occurring to him that Sir John was giving a ball that very night, he ordered the horses to be harnessed and drove away, but only to find Barbara in no humour to listen to him, his regret, however, being allayed by the fact that she was in no humour to speak to anybody. She disappeared very soon from the ball, and Lord Uplandtowers said to himself in the carriage as he returned home: Well, if she doesn't like me, she doesn't like anybody else. The next morning, before his lordship had left his bed, Sir John called to ask Lord Uplandtowers what he had done with Barbara. His lordship answered him that he knew nothing of her, whereupon Sir John replied that she must have run away with—— Sir John refused to pronounce with whom; Lord Uplandtowers accompanied Sir John to Chene, and it was there that Sir John was persuaded to tell him that he feared his daughter had gone off with Edmond Willowes, a widow-woman's son, whose father or

grandfather was the last of the old glass painters in that place. By G——, that's bad——, mighty bad! said Lord Uplandtowers, throwing himself back in the chaise in frigid despair. About six weeks afterwards a letter came from the flighty daughter begging forgiveness, which was granted, on the condition, however, that the young man should travel abroad for a year with a tutor, who would instruct him and bring him back, Venice and Rome and Florence having done all they could to redeem the young man from all traces of his lowly descent. Barbara is broken-hearted, for she is not certain that she will love the young man a year hence as well as she does to-day, despite the fact that Mr. Willowes is of such extraordinary beauty that a Florentine sculptor begs of him to sit for him; and, inspired by the beauty of the young Englishman, he carves a statue of almost antique beauty, which Mr. Willowes would have taken back to England if an accident in a fire in a Venetian theatre had not befallen him.

Willowes had already dragged out of reach of the flames several, women and children probably, and it was in returning for the seventh that a beam crashed across him, burning and tearing his face so frightfully that science could do nothing to remedy the mischief. And feeling that he was an object that none could look upon with pleasure, he wrote to his beloved, telling her of his accident, saying that he must henceforth wear a mask, and though she pitied him much, she could not quell her curiosity to see his mutilated face. But when he had removed his mask at her request, she was unable to look upon him long and sank to the floor. You cannot look at me! he groaned in a hopeless way. I am too terrible an object even for you to bear. His unhappy wife pulled herself together for a desperate strain! He was her Edmond; he had done her no wrong; he had suffered. A momentary devotion to him helped her, and lifting her eyes as bidden she regarded this human remnant, this *écorché*, a second time. But the sight was too much. She again

involuntarily looked aside and shuddered. Do you think you can get used to this? he said. Yes or no! Can you bear such a thing of the charnel-house near you? Judge for yourself, Barbara. Your Adonis, your matchless man, has come to this! The unfortunate man creeps away, and when he dies it occurs to Barbara that perhaps after all she was mistaken in her rejection of Lord Uplandtowers, and he, nothing loth, began his suit again; and she married him, though he could never get her to own that she loved him as she had loved Willowes. But he found her cold and indifferent, and when a letter came from Italy from the sculptor, asking to be paid for his statue of the matchless man, her Adonis, Lord Uplandtowers was a little scared. But he could not refuse the statue, which, when it had been unpacked in a back room of the house, was found to be a full-length figure, in the purest Carrara marble, representing Willowes in all his original beauty, a specimen of manhood almost perfect in line and contour. Phoebus-Apollo, sure, said the Earl of Uplandtowers, who had never seen Willowes, real or represented till now. But notwithstanding his admiration for the statue, he did not wish it to remain under his roof, and he was relieved to find that it had been removed when he returned after an absence of a few days. His suspicions were not altogether allayed, however, for his wife's face wore: A sort of silent ecstasy, a reserved beatitude. And growing more and more curious, he looked here and looked there for the statue, till thinking of his wife's private room, he went towards it. After knocking he heard the shutting of a door and the click of a key; but when he entered his wife was sitting at work, on what was in those days called knotting. Lord Uplandtowers's eye fell upon the newly-painted door where the recess had formerly been. You have been carpentering in my absence, then, Barbara, he said carelessly. Yes, Uplandtowers, she answered, and he began to question her. Why did you go putting up such a tasteless enclosure as that—spoiling the handsome arch of the alcove? I wanted

more closet-room, she said, and I thought that as this was my own apartment—— Of course, he returned. Lord Uplandtowers knew now where the statue of young Willowes was, and it was not long before Lord Uplandtowers missed the Countess from his side——

The story told by you, said Mr. De La Mare, and the story told by Mr. Hardy, are two different things. The delightful dialogue, I answered, you have just heard is Mr. Hardy's, and lest I should be doing him an injustice I will read from the book :

One night, or rather in the smallest hours of the morning, he missed the Countess from his side. Not being a man of nervous imaginings he fell asleep again before he had much considered the matter, and the next morning had forgotten the incident. But a few nights later the same circumstance occurred. This time he fully roused himself ; but before he had moved to search for her, she entered the chamber in her dressing-gown, carrying a candle, which she extinguished as she approached, deeming him asleep. He could discover from her breathing that she was strangely moved ; but not on this occasion either did he reveal that he had seen her. Presently, when she had lain down, affecting to wake, he asked her some trivial question. Yes, *Edmond*, she replied absently.

Lord Uplandtowers became convinced that she was in the habit of leaving the chamber in this queer way more frequently than he had observed, and he determined to watch. The next midnight he feigned deep sleep, and shortly after perceived her stealthily rise and let herself out of the room in the dark. He slipped on some clothing and followed. At the farther end of the corridor, where the clash of flint and steel would be out of the hearing of one in the bed-chamber, she struck a light. He stepped aside into an empty room till she had lit a taper and had passed on to her boudoir. In a minute or two he followed. Arrived at the door of the boudoir, he beheld the door of the private recess open, and

Barbara within it, standing with her arms clasped tightly round the neck of her Edmond, and her mouth on his. The shawl which she had thrown round her nightclothes had slipped from her shoulders, and her long white robe and pale face lent her the blanched appearance of a second statue embracing the first. Between her kisses, she apostrophised it in a low murmur of infantine tenderness :

My only love—how could I be so cruel to you, my perfect one—so good and true—I am ever faithful to you, despite my seeming infidelity ! I always think of you—dream of you—during the long hours of the day, and in the night-watches ! O Edmond, I am always yours ! Such words as these, intermingled with sobs, and streaming tears, and dishevelled hair, testified to an intensity of feeling in his wife which Lord Uplandtowers had not dreamed of her possessing.

Ha, ha ! says he to himself. This is where we evaporate —this is where my hopes of a successor in the title dissolve— ha, ha ! This must be seen to, verily !

Lord Uplandtowers was a subtle man when once he set himself to strategy ; though in the present instance he never thought of the simple stratagem of constant tenderness. Nor did he enter the room and surprise his wife as a blunderer would have done, but went back to his chamber as silently as he had left it. When the Countess returned thither, shaken by spent sobs and sighs, he appeared to be soundly sleeping as usual. The next day he began his countermoves by making inquiries as to the whereabouts of the tutor who had travelled with his wife's first husband ; this gentlemen, he found, was now a master of a grammar-school at no great distance from Knollingwood. At the first convenient moment Lord Uplandtowers went thither and obtained an interview with the said gentleman. The schoolmaster was much gratified by a visit from such an influential neighbour, and was ready to communicate anything that his lordship desired to know.

After some general conversation on the school and its

progress, the visitor observed that he believed the schoolmaster had once travelled a good deal with the unfortunate Mr. Willowes, and had been with him on the occasion of his accident. He, Lord Uplandtowers, was interested in knowing what had really happened at that time, and had often thought of inquiring. And then the Earl not only heard by word of mouth as much as he wished to know, but, their chat becoming more intimate, the schoolmaster drew upon paper a sketch of the disfigured head, explaining with bated breath various details in the representation.

It was very strange and terrible! said Lord Uplandtowers, taking the sketch in his hand. Neither nose nor ears!

A poor man in the town nearest to Knollingwood Hall, who combined the art of sign-painting with ingenious mechanical occupation, was sent for by Lord Uplandtowers to come to the Hall on a day in that week when the Countess had gone on a short visit to her parents. His employer made the man understand that the business in which his assistance was demanded was to be considered private, and money ensured the observation of this request. The lock of the cupboard was picked, and the ingenious mechanic and painter, assisted by the schoolmaster's sketch, which Lord Uplandtowers had put in his pocket, set to work upon the god-like countenance of the statue under my lord's direction. What the fire had maimed in the original the chisel maimed in the copy. It was a fiendish disfigurement, ruthlessly carried out, and was rendered still more shocking by being tinted to the hues of life, as life had been after the wreck.

Six hours after, when the workman was gone, Lord Uplandtowers looked upon the result, and smiled grimly, and said:

A statue should represent a man as he appeared in life, and that's as he appeared. Ha! ha! But 'tis done to good purpose, and not idly.

He locked the door of the closet with a skeleton key, and went his way to fetch the Countess home.

That night she slept, but he kept awake. According to the tale, she murmured soft words in her dream; and he knew that the tender converse of her imaginings was held with one whom he had supplanted but in name. At the end of her dream the Countess of Uplandtowers awoke and rose, and then the enactment of former nights was repeated. Her husband remained still and listened. Two strokes sounded from the clock in the pediment without, when, leaving the chamber-door ajar, she passed along the corridor to the other end, where, as usual, she obtained a light. So deep was the silence that he could even from his bed hear her softly blowing the tinder to a glow after striking the steel. She moved on into the boudoir, and he heard, or fancied he heard, the turning of the key in the closet-door. The next moment there came from that direction a loud and prolonged shriek which resounded to the farthest corners of the house. It was repeated, and there was the noise of a heavy fall.

Lord Uplandtowers sprang out of bed. He hastened along the dark corridor to the door of the boudoir, which stood ajar, and, by the light of the candle within, saw his poor young Countess lying in a heap in her nightdress on the floor of the closet. When he reached her side he found that she had fainted, much to the relief of his fears that matters were worse. He quickly shut up and locked in the hated image which had done the mischief, and lifted his wife in his arms, where in a few instants she opened her eyes. Pressing her face to his without saying a word, he carried her back to her room, endeavouring as he went to disperse her terrors by a laugh in her ear, oddly compounded of causticity, predilection, and brutality.

Ho—ho—ho! says he. Frightened, dear one, hey? What a baby 'tis! Only a joke, sure, Barbara—a splendid joke! But a baby should not go to closets at midnight to look for the ghost of the dear departed! If it do, it must expect to be terrified at his aspect—ho—ho—ho!

When she was in her bed-chamber, and had quite come

to herself, though her nerves were still much shaken, he spoke to her more sternly: Now, my lady, answer me: do you love him—eh?

No—no! she faltered, shuddering, with her expanded eyes fixed on her husband. He is too terrible—no, no!

You are sure?

Quite sure! replied the poor broken-spirited Countess.

But her natural elasticity asserted itself. Next morning he again inquired of her: Do you love him now? She quailed under his gaze, but did not reply.

That means that you do still, by G——! he continued.

It means that I will not tell an untruth, and do not wish to incense my lord, she answered, with dignity.

Then suppose we go and have another look at him? As he spoke, he suddenly took her by the wrist, and turned as if to lead her towards the ghastly closet.

No—no! Oh—no! she cried, and her desperate wriggle out of his hand revealed that the fright of the night had left more impression upon her delicate soul than superficially appeared.

Another dose or two, and she will be cured, he said to himself. It was now so generally known that the Earl and Countess were not in accord, that he took no great trouble to disguise his deeds in relation to this matter. During the day he ordered four men with ropes and rollers to attend him in the boudoir. When they arrived, the closet was open, and the upper part of the statue tied up in canvas. He had it taken to the sleeping-chamber. What followed is more or less matter of conjecture.

I suppose you would like to hear the conjectures, Mr. De La Mare? I think we might skip them, he answered. Instead of reading the entire text, I said, I will remind you of what happened, though I should like you to have heard it in Mr. Hardy's own words, for the story will lose in mine. When husband and wife retired to their chamber for the night, Lady Uplandtowers saw at the foot of the bed a tall

wardrobe which she did not recognise as part of the furniture of the room, but she asked no questions. Lord Uplandtowers, however, was in no humour to be baffled by her silence, and he told her that a playful little thought had come into his mind. Her ladyship, not wishing to seem morose, asked what this could be, and learnt that his whim had been to erect a little shrine ; and on these words he offered to show her what it contained. And without waiting for her answer he thrust out his leg, pressing a spring with his toe which caused the doors of the wardrobe to open slowly. And what do you think, Mr. De La Mare, and what do you think, Mr. Freeman, the wardrobe contained ? Why, nothing less and nothing more than the ghastly figure ! I think, said Mr. De La Mare, that you are misquoting Mr. Hardy. Lord Uplandtowers did not press a spring with his toe ; he pulled a cord. Which is, of course, I interjected, much more like Æschylus than if he had pressed a spring with his toe ! I noticed, too, said Mr. De La Mare, that you accentuated the phrase : he slipped on some clothing. I stumbled over the phrase, I answered, because I thought he had fallen over the clothing, but apparently he had only pulled on his trousers and buttoned himself into a loose coat. I think, said Mr. De La Mare, that you lay too much stress upon trifles.

As the conversation seemed to be getting strained, Mr. Freeman began to speak of *Prometheus Unbound*, and, forgetful of Mr. Hardy, the poets diverged into praise of Shelley, myself quoting sparingly from the great antiphonal outburst in the fourth act, for I had already spoken a great deal, and it was pleasant for me to listen to two poets reciting the passages that had become fixed in their memories.

> From the Indian deep
> The flying-fish leap
> And mix with the sea-birds half asleep.

Was it Mr. De La Mare who uttered the lines ? My poor

memory! my poor memory! as a former conversationalist would say. I can discourse, cried I, on the flight of the eagle, of the wild dove, of the hawk, of the swallow, of the king-fisher, even of the flying-fish from the Indian deep, but not of the barndoor fowl. My readers have read *L'Éducation Sentimentale*, and remember Flaubert's artifices to escape from the difficulty of dialogue: *En rencontrant Pellerin sur le boulevard Armant lui dit: Bonjour, alors ils parlent de choses indifférentes.* And we too, Mr. Freeman, Mr. De La Mare, and myself, spoke on the night in question of different things: of the spiritual death of all the great pictures in the National Gallery upon a paper with a wriggly pattern, suited to a billiard room, sometimes purple and sometimes grey, and of the strange appearance of Lord Ribblesdale in more hunting breeches and crop than ever existed since the time of Nimrod, a grey thing very like oilcloth, placed between two flamboyant Turners, mischievously placed, we thought. And then we talked of the future that awaited the National Gallery when all the Sargent portraits bequeathed to it arrive in vans, stopping in front of the perturbed director on the steps, now thinking how the housing of nine Palestinian refugees and the majority of our generals can be managed. From one van half a dozen generals will emerge in top boots, from another a dozen, and, alas! a third van arrives with a dozen and a half. Twelve threes are thirty-six, twice thirty-six are seventy-two—seventy-two top boots, and how many medals! A new wing will have to be built for the splendid exhibition of all these icy effigies; and we imagined the abashed director retiring to his office to consider the increased prices of building materials, saying to himself: Perhaps fifty thousand pounds will be required to build a new wing, but the tax-payer will not feel the money drifting from his pockets, so great is his admiration for photography and for pictures that remind him of his favourite art. But conversation on painting is not easily carried on among poets, and when Mr. De La Mare began to speak his admiration of

Hardy's description of a certain heath, I went to the book-case and returned with the book, saying : I shall be surprised if it contains anything differing in kind from Fanny's grave, for a man's writings differ in quality, but not in kind. The description of the heath is at the beginning of the book, said De La Mare, and thanking him for coming to my assistance, I began to read :

The most thorough-going ascetic could feel that he had a natural right to wander on Egdon ; he was keeping within the line of legitimate indulgence when he laid himself open to influences such as these. Colours and beauties so far subdued were, at least, the birthright of all. Only in summer days of highest feather did its mood touch the level of gaiety. Intensity was more usually reached by way of the solemn than by way of the brilliant, and such a sort of intensity was often arrived at during winter darkness, tempests and mists. Then Egdon was avowed to reciprocity : for the storm was its lover, and the wind its friend. Then it became the home of strange phantoms : and it was found to be the hitherto unrecognised original of those wild regions of obscurity which are vaguely felt to be compassing us about in midnight dreams of flight and disaster, and are never thought of after the dream till revived by scenes like them. It was at present a place perfectly accordant with man's nature—neither ghastly, hateful nor ugly : neither commonplace, unmeaning nor tame : but like man, slighted and enduring : and withal singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony. As with some persons who have long lived apart, solitude seemed to look out of its countenance. It had a lonely face, suggesting tragical possibilities.

I read this admired passage with alarm, saying to myself : They have read and kept a memory of *Alastor* and *The Leech-gatherer*, and they cannot have forgotten Landor, or Pater, or Mr. Kipling ; any page of *Kim* provides a sample of English that will enable them to appraise Mr. Hardy's prose. And not wishing to embarrass my guests, I did not wait for

their surrender, but began to speak at once, protesting that I would retract all I had said and burn all I was moved to write if they could point to one ardent sentence in the page they had themselves chosen for my edification. The description of the heath, I said, is not so absurd as the description of Fanny's grave, but it is as blind : Wild regions of obscurity ! We must not be afraid of the word *weak*, for it is the word that calls Mr. Hardy into the dock, and the village schoolmaster should be able to write more correctly than : *Intensity was more usually reached by way of the solemn than by way of the brilliant, and such a sort of intensity was often arrived at during winter darkness, tempests and mists.* Bad grammar flourishes in weak minds, and were the weed *more usually* removed, the sentence would not read any better ; indeed, I prefer it as it stands, accepting *more usually* if not as an apology, at least as in keeping with the rest of Mr. Hardy's mind. Alas, we cannot overcome our natural deficiencies, but we may discover them, and Mr. Hardy should have discovered, in the course of a long life, that as his sense of grammar did not allow him to rise to purple passages, it were well to eschew these altogether. Listen, ye admirers of Mr. Hardy :

Then it (the heath) became the home of strange phantoms ; and it was found to be the hitherto unrecognised original of those wild regions of obscurity which are vaguely felt to be compassing us about in midnight dreams of flight and disaster, and are never thought of after the dream till revived by scenes like them. But what purpose, asked Mr. De La Mare, will be served by this critical examination of Mr. Hardy's English ? We are three men of letters, I answered, and it is our business to inquire why the public should have selected for their special adoration ill-constructed melodramas, feebly written in bad grammar, and why this mistake should have happened in the country of Shakespeare. It is true that an artist is never judged impartially by his contemporaries. Shelley believed Byron to be one of England's great poets ; Goethe agreed with him ; yet to-day everybody is a better

judge of Byron's poetry than were Shelley and Goethe, without, however, any very conspicuous advance having been made in criticism ; indeed, it would seem that criticism is retrograde, and that of late the newspapers are, shall we say, *almost* too feverishly interested in immortality.

CHAP. VII

It was at that moment that the door opened, and Mabel seemed to appear with the delightful *surtout* that, alas, I did not bring back last year from Paris, the mirror a little dim and worn in places, but the rich gilding of the chased frame in fine condition. But seeing it in my thoughts laden with heavy, cut-glass decanters and thick, stumpy glasses, I began to lament that the promptings of an unessential economy had prevented me from purchasing it, and then to ask why I had wished to possess it—to prove to my guests that I was a man of taste ? If so, all my pictures were acquired for the same end, or—— But why seek to peer into our hearts, for we shall never apprehend our instincts ; enough it is to know that our instincts are our own and that our reason was picked up at random. Steer, the most instinctive of us, is instigated by a love of beautiful things, so pure that he would collect Chelsea figures and Greek coins though he knew of a certainty that no eyes but his own would see them ; and whilst listening to my present guests I came to thinking that brief portraits of the men among whom my life has been passed would be appreciated by the readers of *Conversations in Ebury Street*—portraits of Steer, Tonks, M'Coll, Harrison and Sickert. But how may these be presented ? I asked myself, certain that nothing is more interesting in literature than a portrait. But I must see them as portraits. Can I ? Steer, for instance, whom I had the wit to pick out as the only painter in London who could fill the blank that Manet's death had made in my life.

Mr. Freeman and Mr. De La Mare carried on an animated conversation, to which I gave a semblance of attention, till they reminded me that if they were to catch their train . . . etc., and having seen them off I returned, seeing Steer in my thoughts, fat and sleek, in his armchair, his hands crossed piously over his belly's slope, his cat curled in an armchair on the other side of the fireplace, both carefully screened from the danger of draughts. The improved cat likes a quiet existence ; his home guarantees absence of change ; he never breaks or soils ; he likes to be fed, to sleep ; and when he awakes he cleanses himself and walks out alone. Never did two different animals partake more closely of the same nature. All the same, there are differences. The cat, it is true, is without friends, but he recognises those who frequent 109, Cheyne Walk. He will bask occasionally on Tonks's knees, but he soon wearies of strange knees and leaves the room with dignity ; and Steer, like his cat, is only familiar with those he has known for twenty or thirty years, ladies excepted. Sir William Eden fidgeted him, and Sir William's presents of game embarrassed him.

Steer's annual outing, from June to the middle of October (he is a landscape painter), begins to torment him at the beginning of May, and if I were to go to spend a May evening with him it would be needless to ask for the reason of his dejected mien. The answer I would get would be the same as I got the year before : I think that people go mad about this time of year ; here is a letter from a woman inviting me to dinner ! But, Steer, you never go away till June. You need not begin to pack for the next three or four weeks, and your servants are old friends. But many arrangements have to be made, he answers, and falls back into meditations, his eyes fixed on his cat, who, happily, is unaware of the impending change.

Once Steer is settled in the county he has chosen for his summer occupation, every hour is devoted to his work. When he is not painting he is considering if the boats in the fore-

ground might not be taken out with advantage. Do they attract the eye? Are they necessary to fill a blank in the composition? He goes away with one or two painters, whose great honour it is to accompany him; once they were Brown and Coles. Brown paints but little nowadays, and Coles—I have forgotten what has happened to him. Their places have been secured by others. The three meet at dinner and the evenings are sometimes wearisome to Steer, for he must talk to his friends and his mind is away among his tones. But though his friends may weary him, he would not encourage me to come down to break the monotony of his evenings, for his thoughts are fixed on the next morning. If the weather be fine he will go in search of a motive; if it rains he will work in a barn, transferring a water-colour on a canvas, with modifications, of course. So a rainy day is welcome, for Steer dreads getting wet even as his cat, and he dreads draughts; draughts prevail even in sheltered nooks, and draughts are like wild beasts, always on the watch for whom they may devour. The four or five months in which it is possible to paint landscapes in England are the prime of Steer's life, and woe to him who would seek to disturb it! In an ill-advised moment Tonks once wrote to him insisting that it was his duty to come to town to judge a painting competition at the Slade. And for a long time Tonks never spoke of Steer's arrival in London without quoting Homer:

> Achilles' wrath, to Greece the direful spring
> Of woes unnumber'd, heav'nly goddess, sing.

And from these observations, made during a period of some thirty or more years and carefully noted, a real man should begin to emerge. Indeed the reader should have begun to see and to appreciate, but in Nature there are always discrepancies, which the writer must remove lest they jar. But I will be daring; nothing shall be excluded, and on my reader I must rely to harmonise what I am about to say with what I

have already said. None would guess that this rather fat, lazy man was once fond of dancing, and that his life was illuminated by a love story. We pitied his suffering when the lady married. Tonks and Brown, Harrison and M'Coll, urged him to hasten after the fugitive, and overtake her before it was too late. I think that we should have all liked to have seen Steer married. He was so happy unmarried that it was only natural we should wish to put his fortitude to the test. There is only one thing that a man cares to do always—his own words, and I discover in them the whole man, body and soul.

We all strive towards oneness, but only Steer has attained it, and his followers are almost as numerous as St. Paul's. We find among them a Timothy, an Apollos, an Aquila, a Priscilla, a Lydia, a Eunice. Brown and Coles and Tonks and Grey and Wheatley have worshipped as fondly as their predecessors did, shall we say in A.D. 57 ? Coles, like Barnabas, disappeared suddenly. I discover likenesses to Peter in Brown, and were I to give thought to it, I should discover a modern Titus, Gaius, Erastus, and many others. But a portrait should not be overladen with detail ; suffice it to say here that the places of Brown and Coles have been taken by Ronald Grey and Wheatley, and these bring an abundance of love and admiration somewhat disquieting to the master, whose genius it is to continue to paint for himself, encouraged by a quiet sympathy such as he gets from his cat, who never bounds about him or bursts into praise at his approach. If it were given to him to choose, he would prefer a more quiet applause than he receives. Ici le document me fait défaut absolument, as my friend Goncourt used to say. Steer rarely writes letters and seldom expresses hard opinions, but in the recesses of his mind I cannot help thinking that if not a thought, at least a feeling is in process of incubation that perhaps Ronald Grey's appreciations lack contrast, the humblest sketch being hailed in almost the same words as the masterpiece that has taken months to achieve. Wheatley

bounds and barks somewhat, and perhaps Steer has felt that Wheatley would do well to notice the dignity of the cat, how he approaches his master, how he prowls about him and retires to the armchair, having fully expressed himself in a single purr ; and Steer thinks, I am convinced, that purring is preferable to any other mode of expression.

For a complete portrait of Steer I shall have to tell of his shrewdness in securing a house perfectly suited to his needs and in harmony with himself ; and this he has done so well that every reader will feel that he might have guessed from what has gone before that Steer would be certain to find a house that overlooked an admirable reach of river, and that his painting would be accomplished in a drawing-room rather than in a vast, empty studio with nothing but easels and a lay figure in it—in a word, a room in which a cat would not be able to endure his life. Nor need I tell the reader that there are many beautiful pieces of furniture in Steer's house and some choice pictures, collections of coins, Chelsea china, Japanese prints, brass Persian salvers, beautifully engraved. The brass trays, or salvers, he brought home not long ago from some obscure rag-and-bone shop. Tonks and I admired them, envy burning in our hearts that we had not done so much, and shame stifling us, for we both knew we might have passed them over without perceiving their rarity. We sigh and regret that we have not spent as much time as Steer in hunting up rag-and-bone shops within a radius of many miles. Steer is acquainted with them all and with many odd corners where wine and cigars can be purchased at trifling cost.

But to show Steer in all his shrewdness would be to stray from essential into subordinate lines of portraiture, and the reader will perhaps perceive Steer more clearly if I leave details which, though they are true, might be easily true of any other man, and tell of his devotion to his old servant, now about eighty-five or six, whom he remembers as having bathed him in his childhood. His portrait of the old lady, as he calls her, represents many months of labour and anxiety.

I think I have heard him say that she sat for the portrait some fifty or sixty times, and when we came to admire, the picture was looked upon by all as a miracle, by Grey, Tonks, and some others whose names have fallen out of my memory. And the awe occasioned by the picture did not pass away quickly; the disciples and followers left 109 overcome, whereas we, Tonks and myself being old friends, waited for the return of the master. I was among the most perfervid admirers of the portrait, yet critical, for when we stood alone in front of it I summoned enough courage to ask Tonks if the blue vase on the shelf did not seem a trifle out of tone. His face led me to expect a reproof, and I judged myself to have escaped lightly when he said in an awed voice: It will go down, and begged me not to mention my suspicion of out of tone to Steer when he returned from his front door. Of course not! I replied, and if I tell the story now it is for the sake of chronicling how Steer reviews his work day by day, straining away after perfection even as I do, for the next time he showed me the portrait the blue vase did not jar the harmony of the picture. I cannot tell at what moment I was proudest of my friend—when I noticed that he had lowered the tone of the blue vase, or when I learnt incidentally that he had spent the summer painting in a county that did not suit him because of a train service that would bring him to London in a couple of hours if a telegram should summon him to the old lady's bedside. But what help could you bring? I may have asked, and if I did, he did not answer: I should not like her to go away without my bidding her good-bye. Steer would not have answered so tritely. I know the thought that was in his mind better than the words which he could not find or did not dare to speak; but since I must interpret his emotive dumbness, I will say: We have lived together so long in life that it would be a pity to be separated when the passing comes. So did I understand him one night whilst bidding him good-bye at the corner of Vale Avenue, and my pride in my friend's nobility made short the way to Ebury

Street. In Sloane Square I stopped to ask myself if I would leave a book I was writing to sit by a dying woman, giving to her the only gift that I could of value, a touch of the hand, the sound of my voice, and she eighty-six years old? I pursued my way through Eaton Square downcast and yet pleased to find a self in me, an ultimate self, I said, and this is why I can do nothing if disinclined, being wholly and irreparably given to art. We cannot repudiate ourselves; even the saints failed to regret their past sins, and they did well, for without sin there is no repentance and we are as the beasts of the field.

My pen has tricked me into theological subtleties altogether out of keeping with my sitter, who is as free from abstract thinking as his cat is. He never rages against the Academy, as Brown does, nor does he look on it as the original of all the evil that art is heir to. He is too lazy to consider whether the Academy is altogether reprobate; it would be fatiguing and do no good, and so his thoughts return with serenity to the rag-and-bone shops, and when the tempter whispers around the doorposts of Cheyne Walk he turns a deaf ear, feeling among other things that he could not manage any further acquaintances, and that for him to join the Academy would be to leave his friends in the lurch. It cannot be that the thought has not dawned upon him that he is too big a man for an Academy; he can have hardly missed it, but it is not brooded; it comes and goes like a dream.

Here endeth the first portrait.

CHAP. VIII

In private conversation Tonks has relegated Steer to the yeoman class and himself to the professional or the mercantile, and I have no fault to find with this classification of himself and his friend; indeed, I avail myself of it gladly, for is it not a sort of preliminary summoning of my friends before a tribunal of select readers?

Before he was a painter Tonks was a surgeon, of what repute among his fellow-workers in the hospital I cannot tell; but my ignorance is of no moment in this portrait, for we need not have information of a man's whole life to write or paint his portrait; knowledge in art is often a bane, robbing us of our innocency, and whosoever knows the human body by heart has to unlearn a great deal before he dares to entrust his career to his eyes. And to forget his anatomy, or to put it behind him, was the A.B.C. of Tonk's initiation; to throw out is harder than to take in, and the desire of art must have been strong in Tonks, for it obliged him to abandon the career he had chosen and in which he was successful, for another in which he might have been a failure. I remember my own suffering in a like dilemma, and Tonks must have hesitated till every moment of his life became a burden to him, almost an agony. He had been practising art in spare moments, but a doctor's spare moments are apt to seem commonplace, even silly, when transferred from his consulting-room to the New English Art Club. . . . A man who leaves his profession faces the world naked and ashamed—ashamed because to leave the road he has chosen to walk in is a confession of failure, naked because he has to put off the old man (exact knowledge), and live henceforth amid ecstasies, dreams, aspirations; humble aspirations, mayhap, but aspirations after all. Think, reader, what a shock it is for a man to leave one self without knowing that he can acquire another self. I shed tears, and the bitterest. Did Tonks shed tears? I do not know, but I do know that he has never regretted the step he took.

The first picture he exhibited in the New English was much admired, and Brown, who was then Slade Professor, appointed him soon after teacher of drawing at the Slade; and Tonks taught drawing whilst learning to draw. Teaching and learning are right and left hand, for there is no such thing as having learnt to write or to draw. We are always learning, and never was a man more anxious to learn and to teach than Tonks. He read everything that was written about drawing;

he listened to all that his friends had to say ; he thought about drawing, and he practised drawing, praying that the secret might be vouchsafed to him, for art has become Tonks's religion. We all have a religion concealed somewhere about us, he says, and it would be hard to imagine this tall, gaunt man without a faith of some kind. Saint or schoolmaster, which is he ? Certainly no gay hedonist, the most casual observer would say on meeting him in the street. A schoolmaster, perhaps, would be the choice of the passer-by, or a doctor, for none puts off the livery he has once worn, not entirely. A schoolmaster ! There is nothing to be ashamed of. Was not Arnold a schoolmaster, yet he was a beautiful English poet. And the value that Tonks's enthusiasm for art has been to the Slade would be acknowledged by Brown, by Steer, by all those who worked with him and who are now working under him ; for when Brown retired, his place was taken by Tonks, and the Slade has thriven, overtopping the Academy schools in results and popularity. Could it be else ? Hatred of the Academy was Brown's thought, but Tonks forgets the Academy as the saint in heaven forgets the sinner in the world.

Tall, gaunt, angular, long-necked, small-headed, long-lipped, with nose high-bridged and vision concentrated on some lofty and distant horizon, Tonks proceeds, camel-like, with swinging gait and upright head. The camel is sober, obstinate, and given to little rages. After a long day's march he is content to browse on a few bushes, and after a long day's teaching at the Slade Tonks browses in his studio, departing a little from his camel-like nature ; for whereas the camel will eat almost anything, Tonks will not sit down to New Zealand lamb, affirming that he can tell it at once from English lamb. But the pleasure he once took in a saddle of lamb in my house which was certainly New Zealand, allows me to attribute his partiality to doctrine rather than to gluttony. He refers with much complacency to his judgment of cheese—English cheese, of course, but I have confidence only in his judgment of wine.

But mayhap, being no bibber, preferring beer to any wine, liking *vin ordinaire* better than fine vintages, I am looked upon by Tonks contemptuously whilst he smacks his long, wide lips over a glass of Pomard, for of love of good wine he has not been able to break himself; pleasure in wine exceeds his pleasure in renunciations. Once he smoked cigarettes without counting; now he has reduced himself to two after each meal, not one—two, not three—two. Of late years puddings and sweets he holds forbidden to him, without, however, being able to give a reason for his abstinences. He is therefore abstemious like the camel because it is his nature to be so. I doubt, however, if he will ever come to denying himself a glass of wine. M'Evoy thinks differently, averring that he will abandon wine for water, oil-painting for water-colour, water-colour for pastel, and will end, perhaps, as a painter in *tempera*, a mural painter, whose life is spent upon scaffolds, going up ladders, an English Puvis de Chavannes. M'Evoy's foretelling is a full measure of exaggeration. but Tonks has added a fine painting to the dome of the London University, his finest work, without questions. It is said that no man has been able to spy a rutting camel in the act, and Tonks is as modest in his, painting his pictures in the midst of desperate secrecy and answering me when I ask him what he is painting: You shall see some day. Whatever might be the work he was engaged on it was not being done clearly in the studio, and I tried to draw Steer into confidences; but my joke about the rutting camel, the great silhouette that the modesty of the beast enables him to hide even when the moon is full, did not unseal his lips. He had clearly sworn not to tell, and he answered: A picture is an accident in our lives, but in Tonks's it is an event. What inference could I draw from such an answer? I meditated plans for the beguilement of Tonks, but he turned a deaf ear to my honied compliments, answering me: I paint, and I am interested in my painting more than in anything else, but. . . . The end of the sentence conveys the sense of a disappointed man, and as Steer and I

go up the street together I murmur my sympathy, and Steer assures me that the disappointment I perceived is no more than a passing mood: He used to show us his pictures, but since that unfortunate evening. . . . After all, he admitted I was right, and acted on my advice.

Tonks had gotten a commission to paint the portraits of a man and wife who had lived in Victorian times, and he had imagined the twain in conversation in their parlour amid the fashion of the period. With a gesture he indicated to us the chimney-piece he had had built up in his studio, and we admired the crystal lustres and thought how sentiment had raised a veil between him and the long, ugly, wedge-like drops. We were glad that he had been lucky enough to discover the replica of a hearthrug that his father used to stand on. He showed us the photographs that had been given to him to paint from, the beautiful daguerreotypes of the 'fifties, precise, explicit as heads by Van Eyck. The man, he said, will stand with his back to the fire, whiskers, braided coat, peg-top trousers; and his wife, reading a letter, will sit on the right, her crinoline filling the little rep sofa. She shall wear a gold locket. . . . His heart brimmed and overflowed, and he showed us the composition he had been seeking for the last two months, and I cried out without warning: Why, your man is ten feet high! An awful silence filled the studio. Tonks began to explain, saying that though it might look wrong, the perspective was right; whereupon I turned to Steer and begged for his support, which Steer granted unwillingly, admitting, however, that the lady's head did seem too small. There's two months' work gone, utterly ruined, scrapped! cried Tonks, and it's all my own fault. Why do I show these things? Have I not had warnings enough before of the folly of it? It is as Steer says, Tonks; the woman's head is too small; no more than that. No; the whole thing is done for! I shall have to begin another composition! Why *do* I show these things? A picture that has been shown has no longer any interest for me. But we see Steer's

pictures as he paints them, Tonks, and—— Everybody is not the same, Tonks answered ; my pictures should never be looked upon except by me till they are finished. But the model, Tonks ! The models never look at pictures, never show interest in them. If the picture is a success and talked about and they look well in it, they like to hear about it, but in the picture itself they have no interest. I shall have to begin a new composition ! There's nothing else to do—I shall have to begin a new composition ! And seeing how distressed Tonks was, I became distressed even as he, perhaps more so, and begged him not to abandon his composition but to enlarge the lady's head. No ; the picture would no longer be mine. I don't blame you, Moore ; it's my own fault for having shown it to you. But you should be glad of having shown it, Tonks, if you insist upon making a new composition. To this Tonks did not answer, but towards the end of the evening he thanked me, saying : You did quite right to say what you thought. I should have found the mistake out within the next three or four days, if not, in the next week or two. You have saved me a lot of trouble, and we saw and heard no more of the picture till it was finished.

Readers of these pages will fall to thinking that henceforth Tonks welcomed criticism, criticism having saved him from much conjecturing and the delays thereof. But our characters do not change, or if they change they change slowly, and to discover why Tonks is more than ever shy to show his pictures whilst he is working on them, we have to suppose that his conscience is against allowing anything into his pictures that is not his own, a folly which nobody knows better than Tonks ; for what is our own ? Was it not Goethe who said that we cease to be original the moment we come into the world ? an aphorism which I have never been able to accept, perhaps because I do not know the context. It may be that Goethe said that an artist, after having borrowed from everybody, past and present, endows all his borrowings with the colour of his own mind. Colour does not seem enough, and I will turn

to the kitchen and ask the reader to think of the difference between the chicken plucked or half plucked hanging in the larder and the delightful fowl on the dish, brown and luscious with gravy and adorned with slices of bacon or sausage. The substance is the same in either case, but how different the appearance and the relish ! So it is in art. Shakespeare took Orestes and created Hamlet ; the same substance transformed in the cooking. Why should we be afraid of the words : in the cooking ? We cannot degrade art ; that is impossible. Moreover, we are only seeking to explain art in these pages as art has often been explained in Tonks's studio. He says : I think others are right to borrow, but I cannot ; to do so would be against my conscience. I cannot tell you why, but it is so. The greatest painters have borrowed, I answered, Rembrandt, Michael Angelo ; and Shakespeare. I know, I know, he cries, but I am different. And he is interested to hear from me that Landor was more anxious about the purity of his work than Milton. But how, Tonks, did you get this conscience ? Did you bring it into the world ? You come from the professional or mercantile class. Now, tell me if the prejudices and conventions of your class, which were a help to you whilst you were a surgeon, are now no more than hitches and hindrances, from which you would escape if you could ? Tonks answers : I do not think that any man can wish himself otherwise than as he is, and on my admitting this to be a truth, he vows that if I were to look sincerely into my own life I, too, would find scruples, not his scruples but other restraining influences, in a word, that I am not freer than he is. And from these remarks the question emerges how much of ourselves we inherit, how much is accidental, and how much we owe to circumstance.

Tonks, who has a taste for philosophy, is easily drawn into an argument that began with our kind and will be debated as long as our kind exists on earth, an interesting disputation, during which Steer, sheltered by several screens from draughts, meditates on the rarity of the gilding of a Thibetan idol that

he saw that afternoon in some rag-and-bone shop in Bayswater. He does not hear Tonks say that if we do not feel comfortable or at home in the society of worldlings, it is because we have a religion and they have none, but wander from one amusement to another without getting any honey out of the flowers, like bees in a honeyless garden. The saints of old time must have been the same when the laity sought them out in their hermitages, or when the saints were called into the town. Your words recall, I interrupt, a page in the writings of Saint Teresa. She tells that the visits of the worldlings to the convent did not please the nuns and that all the conversation, which might easily be supposed to be a welcome variety, was no variety at all but a vexation. We listen to our relatives, the saint says, when they come to see us; we try to seem pleased or displeased at their tidings; but their tidings seem to us irrelevant, futile, and we are glad when they leave us and our thoughts return to God and the eternal. A little later Steer is awakened, or nearly awakened, from his meditation on the Thibetan idol when Tonks denounces all ladies in society for not spending some part of their income on pictures, and the immorality of artists in gratifying with their wit and learning a society that is without art patrons. We may be in a season of scarcity, I interrupt, I don't say we aren't; but I don't see how anything we can do can bring about a season of plenty. Yes, cries Tonks, we can. Art is always latent in mankind and it only requires encouragement to bring it forth. If there was a response, there would be art, but there is no response. Whereupon we talk about the disappearance of the handicrafts and perhaps of the deleterious effect on education which is contemporaneous with the disappearance of beautiful things, and at last I say: Tonks, are you in favour of a tax that everybody whose income is above so much should purchase one work of art, good or bad, every year? And Tonks answers: I think I am!

Here endeth the second portrait.

CHAP. IX

It was whilst thinking of Sickert, and how I might see him as a portrait, that I dropped into a sort of dream, from which I awoke suddenly asking myself by what associations of thought I had come upon Thersites in one of the galleys sailing for Troy ; and whilst seeking the ways by which my mind had wandered as far back as three thousand years, I again dropped into dream, this time awakened from my dream by Bixiou, who discovered in Henri Monnier and was added to *The Human Comedy*. And Sickert, I cried to myself, shall be added to the Comedy of the New English Art Club, if I live to do it, for like these, he, too, is a scoffer, like and unlike his ancestors in literature, more subtle but not less cruel than they. My mind continued to unfold, and very soon it began to reveal an assembly of the New English Art Club : Steer and Tonks and Brown (whom I am afraid I shall think of for evermore as the wise Ulysses, the dauntless Achilles, and the doughty Ajax), in front of a picture by the late Mr. Shannon. Steer, Brown and Tonks raised approving hands ; the residue followed suit ; and the carpenters, thinking the picture had been received unanimously, were about to mark it *A* (*A* stands for *Accepted*, and guarantees the picture against the accidents of space and reconsidered opinions). Sickert was, however, in time. Je m'y oppose ! he cried. The carpenters' faces took looks of amazement, and the jury, understanding somewhat better, wondered at this sudden employment of the French language, and the appearance which Sickert had begun to put on : the lithe body, the round head, the sheathing and unsheathing of the claws. A great deal of his magical word-play has vanished, for I am reading from a palimpsest, but eked out with conjectures here it is :

I have ventured to call back a picture that would have been passed unanimously by a show of hands if I had not kept mine in my pockets. I kept them there somewhat ostentatiously,

as I should not have done if the picture before the jury were some small thing done by a harmless lady on her holiday, worthy of an odd corner. But Mr. Shannon's portrait strikes a death-blow at our very club, which I have always understood was founded as a protest against the false art the Academy favours. Am I right in this? I put it to you, Steer, to you, Brown, to you, Tonks; and to you all, gentlemen of the jury, I appeal for a decision on this very vital point. Is the club for or against the Academy? Sickert waited for a moment for the members of the New English to reply. Brown, you are the oldest member present; I appeal to you A bull downs his head at the sight of a red flag, and this quest adroitly put by Sickert brought Brown over to his side: This club is certainly against the Academy! And when Steer and Tonks and the residue acquiesced in Brown's definition of the club's aims, Sickert continued: Now that we are agreed that the mission of the New English is not to uphold the Academy, will you—Steer, Brown, and Tonks (do not all speak together, for I should not be able to catch your words), tell me in what way the portrait that has just been brought back differs from the portraits that Mr. Shannon exhibits yearly in the Academy. I see the same background, hard, disagreeable, and as gritty as pumice-stone, and upon it, in a material still harder than pumice-stone, a sort of tin duchess, with highly-coloured cheeks and lips and rose-tinted fingers. Pumice-stone and tin is what I see. Now, if you see anything else, and can explain to me why my seeing is wrong, I stand condemned as a person not fit to sit on the jury of the New English Art Club. And if you can't tell me in what way this picture differs from other Shannons, all of which are in pumice-stone and coloured tin, you will, I hope, not jeopardise the existence of our club by exhibiting the picture, and oblige me to resign. Look into the background, gentlemen; look into the face and hands.

Shannon is always hung in the Academy, said Brown; why does he want to send his pictures here? And to this somebody answered: Why, indeed. He sends his best things to

the Academy. And these arguments and many others seeming good to the jury, it was decided that anything were better than that a schism should arise in the New English Art Club, especially as the cause of the schism would be described in the Press of a certainty as a division of opinion, some members being desirous of following the tradition enforced by the Academy, whilst others wished to break away from it. We know Master Sickert, cried the dauntless Achilles, and that is how he will put it. And after a little more conference, the canvas that had been marked *A* as *Accepted* was now marked *R*. Somebody asked if the luncheon hour had not come and gone. We shall meet in another hour, said Brown, and the jury dispersed, Sickert reminding me as he went out of a friend of mine, a leopard called John, whom I used to scratch through the bars of his cage for his pleasure ; and doing this once with the point of my umbrella, the ribs got entangled in the bars so that I could not draw it back, and John, quickly seizing his opportunity, possessed himself of my umbrella and slowly tore it to pieces before my eyes, highly amused at my discomfiture. And just like John, Sickert seemed to be amused.

I did not altogether enjoy John's triumph, but I appreciated Sickert's perhaps more than any member of the jury ; and being a bit of a Thersites myself, I could not suppress a record of it in my article in *The Speaker*, thereby bringing Brown down the gallery on the night of the annual supper of the New English Art Club to tell me that Shannon wished to make my acquaintance ! For why ? I asked Brown, who answered me that Shannon's grievance against me was not that I spoke unfavourably of his work, but because I revealed the secrets of the hanging committee. But why did you undertake to carry his message ? Brown, I think you acted very unwisely ! And I appealed to the wise Ulysses, who was of opinion that I would do better to confine myself to the discussion of pictures that were hung and resist the beguilement of those that were not hung. But Brown—why did he

come from Shannon with a proposal to introduce me? Did he wish to see a fight? But there was no fight, said the wise Ulysses; and the matter was forgotten by him and Brown and Tonks, and would have remained forgotten had I not announced a year or two later that having written enough articles for a book I had sent in my resignation to *The Speaker*, advising the Editor to appoint Sickert in my place. The silence that fell alarmed me. We are sorry you are not going to write any more about art; we think it a pity, said Steer. We hope, said Tonks, that though you cease to be a regular contributor, you will keep the flag flying. Sickert writes very cleverly, but one never knows what he is going to say, or what view he will take on any subject. We know Master Sickert, he continued, better than he knows himself; and his course is always so zig-zag that when I hear he is writing an article I seek the most incongruous opinion I can think of as being the very one he will be most likely to uphold. But, Tonks, outside of his painting an artist may frivol, I answered. If he write about art he should write seriously or not at all; art is my religion. And Tonks continued: Is Sickert's admiration of Poynter's cast-iron serious? I answered that Sickert would like to have Poynter's gift, to employ it differently. Moreover, I've heard you, Tonks, talking kindly about a certain early Poynter: a woman arranging her hair before a mahogany Victorian glass. That is different; I can forgive him all his articles about Poynter, but I can't forgive him his article in praise of the man who does the portraits in the *Entr'acte*. I suppose you know that the *Entr'acte* man works from photographs?

The Speaker was published on Saturday, but private subscribers received it on Friday evening, and every Friday evening we opened the paper with trembling hands, expecting to read an attack on Rembrandt or Titian, or both. But an attack on either would be too obvious a way of setting Chelsea by the ears, and whatever else may be said against Master Sickert, he cannot be called obvious, spoke the fiery Achilles.

So long as he keeps off the Slade, all will be well, I answered ; and every week we looked down his columns for the word *Slade*, and never finding it began to look upon the omission of the attack on Brown's teaching as a piece of almost flagrant originality. He seems absorbed, I said to myself, in upholding the claims of the music-hall as a source of inspiration and his talk turns on the Sisters Lima. Brown and Steer and Tonks would prefer talks about Turner, Constable, and Gainsborough ; and M'Coll must be feeling lonesome, for not once has Stevens's name appeared in Sickert's articles. What ! cried I to myself, another article on the Sisters ? This is really too much ! But so long as the Slade is overlooked. . . . And after all, Degas did discover a divine art in the *café chantant*. Sickert cannot for the present get away from Whistler, who hated England and continued the French tradition, said Steer. But Sickert is never anything for long, and Whistler will be repudiated by and by.

And so did Chelsea live a-top of the toe of expectation, certain that things could not go on as they were going on, expecting an outbreak every week. An outbreak for sure, but what will it be like ? Questions of this kind we put to ourselves and to each other, till Sickert, wearying suddenly of the Sisters, began to write about the use of transfer paper in lithography, declaring the practice to be fraudulent—if not those words, words which allowed an action for libel to be brought against him and the paper he was writing for. He had for some reason left *The Speaker* and was publishing his opinions in *The Saturday Review*. How the change had come about the historians will ultimately discover, but in this little paper we need chronicle no more than that soon after the libel action Sickert took a studio in Paris ; and though we were glad to hear that the French dealers appreciated his painting, and that exhibitions of his work were held every year or more in some gallery, we longed to have him back. We loved him, with all his faults ; our dinner parties fell languid on our lives, and the names of Turner, Constable, and Gainsborough no

longer inspired us, for he was no longer by to set our preferences at naught in witty articles. Steer and Brown and Coles went to the country and brought back pictures, and Tonks pondered the pre-Raphaelites ; and all the aftermath, 1850, was collected at the Tate. We read what Conody and Rutter had to say, but their words were as dust and ashes, for we were wondering what Sickert would have had to say about Windus and Sands and Hughes. We lived in recollections of him, and our best talks were those in which was related news of the enviable repute he was winning on the *boulevards*. We railed at his limitations and lauded the luscious painting of his Dieppe streets, and heard without jealousy that his river banks were inquired for in a rising market. We were glad to hear these things, for we wished Sickert well, and desired to see him at our dinner tables, but knew we should not get him back till the French fortune began to fail him. Unless indeed his own natural wantonness brings him back to us, we said ; and whilst the words were on our lips he was wearying of French studios, French food, the French language, and of his friend Jacques Blanche.

Our next tidings were that he had been seen in London, at which we rejoiced greatly, for we needed his pen ; none other could write down the terrible heresies that had arisen amongst us. So said the fiery Achilles, and we all felt with Tonks that Sickert had come back to scotch the head of Post-Impressionism, an evil thing that had seduced the most gifted of the Slade students, those very ones that Tonks had relied upon to continue the tradition of Turner and Gainsborough and Constable, with a thought now and then for those of Millais and Holman Hunt. And it was about this time that burly Wyndham Lewis began to stalk the land with a fat book under his arm called *Blast*, gaining for himself the name of the new Beelzebub in Chelsea. And there was Roger Fry, too, who on his return from France began to lecture about some pictures he had seen in a town called Aix ; disciples flocked, all the old figures reappearing : Timothy, Apollos, Eunice,

Lydia, for the world was weary of representative art, and the people went about crying : Cezanna ! Cezanna ! The mind creates ; the substance is but a fable, and no longer shall we paint the poor poppy of the field or garden but the archetypal poppy which is in heaven. And this doctrine seeming to threaten the very existence of the Slade, the New English Art Club, its adjunct, began to consider if it would not be better to save some of its skin rather than lose the whole of it, which might well befall if the works of the reformers were withheld any longer from the public. But Steer and Brown and Tonks could not act on a Committee whose first business was to find place on the line for canvases which they believed to be sins against the truth, against Apollo. All credit would they lose for themselves and for their art, and to make matters easier for the Committee they went into exile, as the ancient Gods did in the third or fourth century.

There is perhaps nothing sadder in this world than Gods in exile, and I do not think I shall forget the sadness of the evenings we spent in 109, Cheyne Walk, and in Vale Avenue, sitting together asking ourselves if Sickert would come to play St. George and the dragon for us, writing about the forthcoming exhibition of pictures at the New English, mingling the old faith with the new ; only he could do this with authority because of his numerous following. Would he take sides ? To side with Wyndham Lewis would be to decry his own beautiful painting, and we did not believe that Sickert would do this even for the sake of setting people by the ears, a pleasure which he abstains from with difficulty. We asked ourselves if he would attempt to discern the virtues and the vices of Cubism and Post-Impressionism. An article on the two schools would set Chelsea talking. But what had become of Sickert ? We had not seen or heard of him for many months. Our last news of him was that he had a studio in Venice, and possibly he still kept it on ; he had had another in Dieppe—had he relinquished that one ? And the studio in Fitzroy Street and the two studios in Charlotte Street ? At

any one of these he might be found ; if he were not there himself his address would be known to the caretaker, and excursions to these northern streets were meditated. But I do not think anybody went in search of Sickert ; each pleaded the fullness of his own life ; and it was not till a few weeks later that we heard that Sickert had gone to live in Camden Town, where he had many pupils, men and women, all working under his direction. A little later we heard that Sickert had been elected Professor of Drawing at the Westminster School. We were not prepared for such activities as these, and gazed at each other bewildered. Sickert came to visit us, and after one delightful evening, an echo of old time, we saw him no more. Again he had deserted us, and as there seemed but small hope that he would return to Chelsea, we resumed our old conversations in Cheyne Walk and in Vale Avenue : Constable, Gainsborough, and Sir John Millais's drawings in *Punch* ; or we went to Hampstead and listened to M'Coll, who talked to us about Stevens's pictures and sculpture. We listened to his wisdom and enjoyed it, but Sickert was always at the back of our minds ; it is the way of men to seek reasons and we could not yet understand why Sickert needed a studio in Venice, a studio in Paris, a studio in Dieppe, and three or four in London. A rumour was going about Chelsea that he received private pupils at Camden Town and dispensed instruction in drawing every evening at the Westminster School of Art. He seems to have resigned himself altogether to teaching, somebody said, and that evening or the next evening another rumour reached us that Goupil was making arrangements for an exhibition of his works on a large scale. The different rumours that reach us cannot all be true ! cried Tonks. He cannot paint or draw and teach all day ! an aphorism which neither Brown nor Steer nor I were in the humour to contest. In brief, the spirit of Sickert was over us ; we could not get away from it. An imminency had come into our lives ; we were like cattle in a field lowing at the approach of a thunderstorm. At last the crash came : Sickert had

brought back a method of painting from France invented by himself, by means of which any intelligent pupil could be taught how to paint, not a great work destined for an eternity of admirations, but a picture that no reasonable jury would be found to reject. I am afraid we shall lose half our students, said Tonks. The object of going to a school of art is to learn enough about painting and drawing to get a picture into an exhibition, said Brown, a doleful remark, which none of us dared to contest; and feeling that he had again been indiscreet, he added: The course of art will not be ultimately affected, but. . . . What do you think, Tonks? and without waiting for Tonks's answer he continued: If you should find yourselves able to accept some of Sickert's method of painting, there will be no desertions. But we shall be teaching a method in which we don't believe, cried the fiery Achilles. I shall resign!

No one spoke, and forgetful for a moment of the Gods in exile, I will take upon myself to explain to the reader Sickert's great discovery: how a pupil can attain quality—the gift that genius brings into the world, as such it had always been considered. Already I have overstated the case; Sickert never claimed that his method made over his genius to his pupils. His contention did not go further than to claim that his method enabled the pupil to escape from a quality not easily distinguishable from linoleum. The reader asks: But what is the quality easily distinguished from linoleum? and to help him I can do no more than to tell that every woman knows the difference in quality between silk at three or four shillings a yard and silk at five-and-twenty shillings a yard; but only painters know that Manet and Whistler's quality is more beautiful than any to be found in silk or satin, ivory or gold. But how did they do it? the reader asks, and I answer: Beauty of touch is easily recognisable on the piano or fiddle; but if I go further and say that touch is recognisable even on the printed page, the reader will give up hope, saying: I shall never be able to distinguish quality. But I would not

have him lose hope, and to save him from despair I will return without delay to Sickert, who in his meditations on how he might teach his pupils to avoid the quality so flagrantly expressed in linoleum, must often have murmured: The linoleum quality comes with the second painting, and until a method of teaching is discovered whereby the pupil can get—I will not say quality (quality is a gift from the Gods), but something that will seem like quality, teaching is vain. And on this much Sickert fell into still deeper meditations, out of which he roused with these words in his mind if not on his lips: Why shouldn't the paint be put on in dots? A face painted in that way may look as if the sitter had the smallpox, but the linoleum look at least will be avoided. But how is the difficulty of drawing to be overcome? Drawing has been the besetting difficulty of Ingres's life and of mine, and it is in correcting the drawing that the paint becomes linoleum. How then can the pupil . . . He sighed, leaving the sentence unfinished, and the problem seemed insoluble till one day he jumped out of his chair crying: I have got it! Drawing, after all, is more or less a question of subject. If we leave out the hands of a woman playing the piano and cover them up with her cuffs, a great part of the hardship disappears. And a man standing on a hearthrug need not lean on the mantelpiece; he may stand on both legs, exactly like a post, and he may hold his hands behind his back. Moreover, the pupils need not trouble themselves about hands, nor faces, nor is their concern with figures. What we are after is quality, or something that will pass for quality. A gable-end with a sweep of pavement is enough for our purpose. Nor need the pupils trouble about values; tone—yes, but a picture may have quality without having values. Values were a sixteenth-century invention, and we will leave them to Steer. Sky: ultramarine broken with vermilion. A gable-end: brown broken with light-red. An excellent short-cut to gold, one which will come in useful should a music-hall inspire the pupil: Shadows: raw umber. Half-lights: yellow ochre. High-

lights : Naples yellow ; rather drawing-mastery, but the drawing-master knows the A.B.C. of teaching, and what we have to do is not to deride the drawing-master but to improve his methods, that is bring him up to date. The beautiful smooth quality, with the little ridge of paint when the round brush turns over, cannot be taught, but by the tap, tap, tap method the pupil will avoid linoleum, confining it to its place : back passages.

The young ladies who were attracted by Sickert's delightful manners and what remained of his original beauty (for Sickert as a young man—but of that anon), packed their trunks and in groups of twos and threes and single figures journeyed all over Europe painting gable-ends. A little later chimney-pieces with glass ornaments all a-row became popular, and the end of it all was a multitudinous exhibition of pictures, held in the Albert Hall, I think, and the assembling of the Slade Professors to consider the new situation. Brown, who was looking forward to his retirement, walked across the studio in thought, and returning abruptly asked me to devote an article to the question. Of course, I answered, I am in your hands, but I doubt if there's any cause for gloom, rather for the throwing up of caps and crying: The age of Cimabue has returned ! The question is not how to stop a leakage, for there is no leakage ; the Slade is crowded ; you may begin to refuse pupils any day, the newspapers devote more space to the art of painting than ever and——The question, said Tonks, is : shall we adopt Sickert's method of teaching in the Slade ? If we don't, shall we be able to compete with Westminster ? That is the question. But, my dear Tonks, there is no reason why you should modify your teaching ; there is room for both schools and for Cubism. My dear Moore, you're untroubled with a conscience, and will never understand a certain side of life. I cannot teach what I don't believe in. I shall resign if this talk about Cubism does not cease ; it is killing me. And pleasantly conscious that I held my audience in the hollow of my hand, I said : Sickert has fallen in love with one of his

pupils. I have forgotten her name, but she has the most wonderful cream neck. And you think, said Tonks, that a man in love has not time for anything but love? Not if he be truly in love, I answered. So, said Steer, the attractions of the lady will save the Slade from the trick of laying on the paint in dots! Beauty coming to the aid of art, I answered. But you have heard only a part of the story. The lady, though flattered by Sickert's courtship, is not certain that a younger man—— How like a woman! cried Tonks. Will she be the first to refuse a man who, though fifty, is still one of the handsomest of men, and certainly the most winning? Youth triumphs over genius, I answered, but if she had seen Sickert. . . . Why do you stop? Tonks asked me.

My thoughts had gone back, I said, to some twenty years ago. I had come over from London to spend a week with Jacques Blanche at Dieppe, and was talking in the dining-room with him and his mother about the tapestry they were lucky to come upon in some old shop. How precise and strangely vague memory is! I can see the colour, every shade of the green, but nothing of the design; and the table, too, already laid, the napery, glass and silver catching the light, is part of my impression of Sickert coming in at the moment of sunset, his paint-box slung over his shoulders, his mouth full of words and laughter, his body at exquisite poise, and himself unconscious of himself as a bird on a branch. No, I don't think that anybody was ever as young as Sickert was that day at Dieppe. A few months afterwards in London he shaved his moustache, a frizzle of gold—God only knows why! and ever since has sought new disfigurements: cropping his hair, growing a beard. All you know of him to-day is that which neither he nor Time can undo, the beauty of the line of the head and face, and what he cannot suppress or curtail, his wit. It flows always through his speech, and if we are captured by it, how much more easily will a woman be? Or do I exaggerate? Tonks, you are saying nothing. There's a good deal of truth in what you say, and I hope the young

woman will appreciate her luck, answered swift-footed Achilles. And my eyes roving from him and falling upon the wise Ulysses, I asked : And you, Steer, what do you think ? Whether her choice will fall on genius or youth ? I think, said Ulysses, that old Jarvis, the furniture dealer at Hammersmith, once spoke words of wisdom to you : I don't say that when young girls marry men of fifty they don't love them, but when a girl has been bedded she begins to look after younger men. And you must not forget that Sickert's wife will see him every day, and I don't think he is a man one should see every day. You know the old story of the clown's wife, who said : Yes, my husband is talkative enough in the circus, but at home he is as silent and as melancholy as a cockroach. We will hope, said Brown, our doughty Ajax, that the lady is a young woman of such good sense that she will keep Sickert from the vice of Post-Impressionism. And the word rousing the fleet-footed Achilles, the rest of the evening was spent in our usual denunciations of it and other kindred heresies, parting as usual soon after eleven as men part who have lived their lives together united by an idea.

I know not which Saturday it was after the Saturday I have just related that I brought to Vale Avenue the news that Sickert had at last succeeded in persuading the young woman to take him for better or for worse, the call of genius having proved in the end stronger than that of youth. We must give them a dinner, said I ; and it was agreed that as Sickert's oldest friend I should be host. We must wear evening clothes, said Steer, in deference to the bride ; and Tonks reminded me that a wedding feast would seem trite and commonplace if I were to forget the flowers, some floral wreaths for the table ; and himself charged himself to bring a great posy to hand to Mrs. Sickert when she arrived. Or would it be better, I asked, to withhold the posy till the moment of their departure ? Now, what fish would you like, Tonks ? I might get a bass from Devon—— Never mind the fish, but let there be champagne, for nothing makes a dinner

go like champagne. And as you don't like writing letters, I'll write to tell them that we shall expect them at eight. So be it, I answered ; all shall be as you wish it—champagne and flowers. We parted with restrained speech and furtive faces, and when we assembled on the balcony, our eyes set on the Victoria Street end, for they would come that way, the evening became more and more memorable, till, unable to bear the tension any further, I said : If they delay much longer my dinner will be spoilt. The ominous clock struck the half hour, and Steer asked how long we should give them, and I replied that it would indeed be disgraceful if they arrived and found us sitting at table ; and Tonks, who always looks distressed if Steer's faintest suggestion is not immediately acted upon, agreed that we should wait till nine. The cabs continued to go by, and it was not till the hands of the clock pointed to the quarter that Tonks cried : Look ! This driver is seeking for a number over the way, and not finding it he crosses over. He is coming towards us ! He is bringing them to us ! The cab stopped, and I said : Now for the pretty shoes, the silk stockings, the grey silk dress. Grey, not white, it will be ; registry office brides are wedded in grey. And intense was the moment when Sickert stepped out of the cab ; intenser still the next moment, for the bride did not follow him. Why has he not brought her ? Where is she ? I cried, leaving the balcony and running down to meet him. You shall hear presently, said Sickert, speaking almost inaudibly. She is not dead ? I could not check the words. No, she is not dead, he answered ; and in mournful silence and dejected mien I led my old friend into my house and up the staircase into the presence of Tonks and Steer, who had come in from the balcony. She married the other fellow ! was all he could say, and we sat staring at each other, unable to find words, and he as dumbfounded as ourselves.

Dinner is served, sir. I'll tell you all about it after dinner, he whispered on the staircase, and our curiosity leaving us no peace we felt that we would have almost bartered the dinner

for the story that was to come after dinner ; and lest Sickert should change his mind and not tell it, I plied him with wine till the thought came to me that if he were to get tipsy we should not hear it, and the same thought must have been in the minds of Steer and Tonks, for the third time wine was offered to them they refused it. No more wine is needed, Mabel ; we'll have coffee in the drawing-room, I said. But Mabel seemed unable to bring herself to close the drawer of the sideboard, and as I dared not ask her to leave we sat exasperated, till at last the closing of the door brought Sickert to his story. He began it in a low, stricken voice : She was always pleading for the morrow, saying that if I gave her time to get accustomed to the thought of marriage she would wed me. At last, coming to the end of my patience and unable to think of any other way out of the difficulty, I pressed her into a cab, saying : All your doubts will vanish at the sight of the registry office. The Camden Town registry office, Sickert continued, is not situated in a noble street, but she needn't have noticed it. She did, however, and guessing that it seemed paltry in her eyes, I said : We shall never see the street again. If you had any of the real affection you speak of for me, you wouldn't have asked me to marry you in so mean a street. I really would not like my people to know I was married in Camden Town. It was once a very pretty village, I replied, and with various arguments, all of them good and honest, I persuaded her to come upstairs, but she barely crossed the threshold when her courage seemed to fail her : There are no pictures on the walls ! and seeing that nothing would satisfy her but her own parish, I said : You haven't given notice. She answered that she had. But we shall not get to Pimlico before the registry office closes. Why do you want to be married to-day ? she asked, turning suddenly, and feeling that I could not say the right thing in any circumstance, we got into the taxi and went for a drive. Anywhere, no matter where, so long as the drive be long, I cried ; and the taxi-driver, seeming to understand, took us

over Hampstead Heath, and the same things were said over and over again all the way to Barnet.

Did you go as far ? I asked, unable to restrain my curiosity. We were within a couple of miles of Barnet before she noticed that we were in the country, and taking fright at the fields and hedgerows, she said : We must go back, and I called to the taxi-driver to return, but he was running out of petrol and said we must go on to Barnet. At Barnet there was a long delay, for the taxi-driver had not had his dinner, and it was in the middle of Hampstead Heath that the taxi broke down. I spoke of my friends, mentioning Mr. Hammersley, but the taxi-man would not leave his machine, and she proposed that he should come inside and play gooseberry. And the three of you spent the night in the cab ! I interjected. Did you sleep ? No, he went off to sleep and snored, and she dozed a little on my shoulder, and when the heath began to lengthen out I asked her to come for a walk, and she answered : The taxi-man will think we want to leave without paying him ; so we didn't go many yards. At eight o'clock the taxi-man began to push his machine, and as we couldn't let him push it by himself we all helped ; but we couldn't get it very far, and I don't know what would have happened if we hadn't met another taxi, who took us in tow. Hammersley came down in his dressing-gown, and he heard from me that I wasn't married yet, Edith not liking to be married in Camden Town. Hammersley gave us breakfast, and by the time the taxi-man returned, his taxi mended, she told me her mind was made up. But on arriving at the registry office, she said : Look ! look ! There's Ernest ! and she pointed to a tall fellow in a blue suit and a grey hat leaning on his cane at the door of the office. Are you going to marry him or me ? I asked : and she replied : I don't know what I'm going to do now. You had better settle it between you. We agreed to leave it to her, but she said : You must settle it between you. As you can't make up your mind to marry me, I said, I suppose you had better marry him. I can't wait any longer. And I left

her with Ernest, whom she married, no doubt, in the Camberwell registry office.

Sickert, said I, you have had a wonderful escape ; she'll make that other fellow as miserable as she has made you. I'd liefer be miserable with her than happy with anybody else, he answered, and we admired the depths of feeling that inspired the words and were ashamed that we had looked upon him as a Thersites or a Bixiou. It may be that Steer and Tonks were not as contrite as I was, and attributed the words which we all remember to histrionics, to Sickert's self-consciousness of the situation in which he found himself involved, to a desire to find the right words to express himself and it. We are never altogether natural ; the educated cannot be. Even dogs are actors ; only cats are themselves and nothing but themselves. So it may be that Sickert was still Sickert, unabsolved from self even in his grief, a plain story understandable by all as I have told it, but when I look back on that evening I fail to discover the cause of the quarrel that began suddenly to rage between Sickert and Tonks ; about a question of drawing, it could not be else ; mayhap the Slade was at the bottom of it. But at such a moment ! I can recall no more than the image of a man overwhelmed and unable to defend himself.

The anger that had been roused died quickly. Our talk went back to the jilt. The word is mine ; I put it down, for never once did it pass Sickert's lips. He was true to his own words all that evening ; I'd liefer be miserable with her than happy with anybody else, and as he stood looking round the room, a little stupefied in his grief, he became slowly aware that the picture he had given me was not on the wall : I see you have not hung up the picture. There is not sufficient light to exhibit it on my walls, I said ; the figures in the auditorium are all so small and so lost in brown shadows that the picture is merely a dark spot. If that be so, he answered, may I have the picture back ? Certainly ; and my heart misgave me whilst seeking it out lest Tonks and Steer should pass some criticism upon it. But they said nothing, and we watched the

painter from the balcony proceeding with grave and sad steps, his music-hall in his hand, up the long, desolate street of Ebury towards Victoria, where he would take the bus.

Here endeth the third portrait.

CHAP. X

In the early 'eighties I was living in the Temple and I think it was Sickert who took me round to the Cock Inn, saying that he had arranged for Steer to be there to meet me, and we came upon him in one of the compartments or pens in which six diners, three on either side, found scanty room for their elbows whilst taking their dinner adown the narrow table; and the places opposite being vacant we sat with him. A quiet, sympathetic young man he seemed to me to be, and I was glad to visit his studio and to accept a picture from him. We continued to see each other; our friendship increased year after year till the great break came when I fled from London, horrified by the Boer War. Of the New English Art Club I had heard nothing whilst I was away, and when I returned a new and important member of the club was introduced to me at Steer's round table: Peter Harrison, a tall, handsome man, handsome as Sickert but more frank of face, with blond hair, blond beard, high nose, white skin and blue eyes, and the appearance and nobility of a stag—a many-antlered intelligence I soon perceived his to be. And assuming that the reader has acquainted himself with the volumes entitled *Hail and Farewell*, it is only necessary to say that the occasion of the dinner was to welcome me on my return from Ireland. The ear of memory still retains the ring of Tonks's voice in the words: How pleasant it is to have him back among us, criticising our pictures. But we are talking now of Harrison, and puzzled by his knowledge of painting I drew nigh to Steer, who murmured to me: He exhibits with us; and I learnt as we went upstairs that Harrison was an amateur.

Turgenev was a wealthy landowner and so was Landor, and each increased the volume of English and Russian literature. Neither Swinburne nor Shelley wrote for money, yet who would call them amateurs? Wagner was poor, but instead of writing for money he asked his friends to give him money, and his borrowings have enabled his biographers to reveal him to us in all his little humanities. I would write pages about these and Mathilde and her husband; once the pen has written the fatal letters the pen assumes control; but I will not be governed by my pen but by my subject, which is Peter Harrison, who has not painted a masterpiece comparable to *The Ring*, wherefore Wagner's name has been inexcusably dragged in. By the way, his name is Harrison but not Peter Harrison. Peter is but a nickname; how it was acquired I don't know. And now I am free to continue my story of the dinner party, to tell that Sickert was not present, to say that though his absence is always regretted, on this occasion he was forgotten. He always is, more or less, when Harrison is present, for Peter Harrison's face is as pleasant to look upon and his talk is as entertaining, less sparkling, perhaps, but not less agreeable, a more solid fare. Shall I convey anything to the reader if I say that Peter Harrison's talk is more like Manet's, and Sickert's like Whistler's? Now I come to think of it, Harrison's colouring and his manner recall Manet Manet, too, was a man of wealth, and in the Nouvelle Athènes his appearance and indeed his manner of speech separated him from those who lived by painting. And no doubt Landor's appearance also distinguished him from—shall we say Southey, his boon companion, his yoke-fellow in some conversations. And Harrison, though he was with us a great deal, always seemed a stranger among us, one who had strayed into our society; and his pictures, too, though in many ways as accomplished as those of other exhibitors, seemed to have strayed into the New English, lacking something hard to define, habit, perhaps. We hoped and the Press hoped, but our hopes were dashed, for without warning, Peter Harrison

sent no more pictures to our exhibitions. I write *our*, for I would identify myself with this artistic movement; indeed, even if I wished to, I could not dissociate myself from it, having been from the beginning its critic and the literary expositor of its ideas. However, there it is; I have written it: Our exhibitions! For some time we were sorry to miss him from the walls, and hoped that the next exhibition would bring him back to us; but it went by without a picture from Harrison, and so did the next and the next, and when we dined at his house we were not shown any pictures. Some three or four that he had painted in former days were allowed to remain on the walls, but no new work was shown; and when we asked for the reason, he said he had ceased to paint, qualifying the admission with the words: I have ceased to paint for exhibition. And I remember him saying: I am not a fool; I know what good painting is and don't want anybody to tell me. And from that day to this nobody has seen a canvas by Peter Harrison.

Art is not with us always; we know not whence it comes, nor whither it goes. The Muse was with us when we were poor and unhappy, and when we were rich she deserted us. Many instances could be given, and against these other instances could be set in which the Muse demanded easy and comfortable circumstances and refused to follow the artist to the garret. Nor is the Muse faithful to young men; she visits them and leaves them helpless before half their lives have worn away. She comes to men in their old age and inspires one work, and henceforth they are stranded in commonplace. Yet there must be a law. Our pens write easily the word *must*! Why must there be a law? That there is a mystery is certain, and one that artists ponder, the afflicted and the unafflicted alike. Why is it that the poet sits down in the morning and writes a poem, sometimes two or three? And why is it that six months pass without a stanza? He is in good health; he sleeps well and eats well, and his lady loves him; yet the poet is sterile as the cat

in the armchair. And sometimes intellectual sterility is a sort of creeping paralysis, the artist producing less and less each year, till he reaches a moment when he produces nothing. Yet he is as intelligent as he was before, very often more intelligent, and very often his health is better. He can walk twenty miles without fatigue, he can do everything he could do when he was a young man, except paint.

Harrison's health is not that of a policeman, nor is his strength, yet I am disposed to believe that in the words: I have ceased to paint for exhibition; I am not a fool; I know what good painting is, he has given the true reason for his abstention. Somebody in the eighteenth century told the same story, saying that when he looked through some books he had published he was not altogether displeased with the writing of them; but seeing clearly that they were not first-rate, in other words, that they did not lift him into English literature, he preferred to lead the amiable and useful life of a country gentleman without troubling literature any further, and I think Harrison thinks in the same way. And yet there is another side to the question. A French painter who had risen almost to the front rank, earning an income of twenty thousand francs a year by painting shall we say twenty pictures a year, was approached by a picture dealer, who said: Why not paint only five pictures twice the size of those that you are painting, and charge three times as much? The time spent on small canvases is almost the same as that spent on large. To which the painter gave a reply, the philosophy of which recommends itself to me and will, no doubt, to my readers: But what should I do with the rest of my time? If the painter have a place in the country, and dogs, and perhaps a farm, if he plans an avenue or lays out a few gardens and adds to the gardens little by little, buys a few books on iron-work and enters into a correspondence with French firms for the supply of an old gateway, his time passes quite agreeably. A little nap between breakfast and luncheon; luncheon comes—a pleasant break in the day, and after luncheon a

walk round his big or little property. There is shooting, there is fishing, and when he is too old for shooting, well—another little nap after luncheon. The wife is reading a novel on the sofa; friends come in. Tea-time approaches; the friends leave, and then there is dinner to look forward to. In view of his old age, gluttony should be encouraged, and a taste for wine. Dear me! it is time to go to bed; and the day has passed without his knowing it.

We are all travelling towards the happy days when ambition no longer frets like a hair shirt, and the insensate desire to add to English literature or art has ceased. Harrison is there; we are not. Wherefore our pity and our regrets are wasted when we dine with him in his beautiful house, filled with collections of exquisite Chelsea and Dresden, water-colours by Turner and pictures by Steer. Under our feet is a lovely Aubusson, about which I hesitated many years ago; but he who hesitates about an Aubusson, loses it, alas! alas! The beauty of that Aubusson was a suffering to me, but that suffering has been removed, for Harrison asks me no longer to his annual dinners at which Steer and Tonks and myself were the company. The dinners continue, Tonks on the right hand, Steer on the left, but my place is filled by—whom? Or is it left empty? These are matters on which I need information, for my absence from Harrison's dinners has caused me to doubt myself. I am no longer the same self as I was, or perhaps I should say no longer the same self in my own eyes, which is much more important. My enforced absence from these dinner parties has brought my conception of myself, formed through long years, to naught. I had looked upon myself as caviare to the general and a delectable dish for the few. And he that has acquired a taste for caviare never loses it; and he that has swallowed an oyster is faithful to the oyster to the end of his life; and as the lovers of caviare and oyster are faithful, so were my friends to me, but now, all of a sudden, things are different; for the first time somebody who once liked my company likes it no more.

I am wrong ; there was another—a woman, but she need not be named here.

Here endeth the fourth portrait.

CHAP. XI

When I said that I was for some years the critic of the New English Art Club and the exponent of its views, I was led astray. I should have said that I shared that honour with D. S. M'Coll, a man of many parts, a Scotsman, as his name tells (let us be thankful he is not Irish), a Presbyterian (let us be thankful he is not a Roman Catholic), an escaped one from the kirk (for that we also must be thankful), who was destined for the kirk, educated at its expense at some first-rate school and then at Oxford, where he took honours of all kinds, a brilliant Greek and Latin scholar, a winner of the Newdigate, and a painter of charming water-colours, a man of whom anything might be expected, some friends expecting pictures, others poems, a few so greedy for his fame that they hoped for both ; and the kirk, the greediest of all, asking to be repaid the money it had spent upon him, M'Coll, the most honourable of men, set himself out to repay it. He succeeded with his pen and pencil, God may know how he did it—I don't ; an inconceivable task that would have borne me down into suicide or some silly illness that would have carried me out of this world of debts and theologies. A most remarkable man, as the reader has already guessed, and what appearance, I wonder, would the reader give him if I were not at his elbow to tell that M'Coll is tall and lean, long-legged and small-headed, hooked-nosed, with small, wise eyes, calling to mind a stork. A stork is long-legged, long-billed, and his wise eyes are small and deep-set. Though he is a bird from the south, the stork wears an air of Celtic melancholy, and when it rains he wraps himself in his wings as in a cassock and looks like a Scotsman immersed in the doctrine of original

sin or predestination. And I think it must have been M'Coll's seriousness at private views that provoked Conder to draw attention to or to invent the buttoning of the jacket whenever ladies collected about the critic; at which we all laughed and envied M'Coll exceedingly.

M'Coll began his literary life in *The Spectator*, introduced, probably, by some poems he sent to the Editor, and the poems led to art criticism. He wrote for many years, practising painting in his holidays and producing many pictures that Steer admired, detecting, however, in them a somewhat too scrupulous taste, thinking, if he did not say it, that M'Coll, like Whistler, was frightened of failure, holding to the belief that sins of the flesh were nothing, however numerous, compared to a sin against taste. Theology again plays its part, for it is not held by all sects that however great the number of a man's venial sins, they do not equal in their muster one mortal sin. M'Coll, though seemingly divided between the arts of painting and literature, has given himself more willingly to painting than to writing, and perhaps it was to escape from writing and to have more time for painting that he became curator of the Tate Gallery. But a man does not come of a long Presbyterian ancestry for nothing, and M'Coll's conscience is always spying out new duties. How many men have lost themselves in striving to follow that will o' the wisp, duty? But, let us not be led into moralising; to reprove others is enough for us. Afterwards M'Coll was given the Wallace Collection to look after, and pursued by a sense of duty he spent much time on a catalogue which nobody had asked him to compile. Steer and Tonks and I, who admire his pictures and drawings, despaired, but M'Coll pursued his somewhat sombre way undeterred, cultivating duty and taste to excess, till Tonks and Steer began to speak of M'Coll's articles in *The Saturday Review* (he had left *The Spectator* for *The Saturday*) as the encyclical letters of the pope of Hampstead. Tonks and Steer, though derisive, never lost their admiration. Steer writhes a little, so harsh are M'Coll's

judgments sometimes, and Tonks is lashed into fury and seeks relief in recalling an accidental meeting of Steer and M'Coll in the gardens of Hampton Court, Steer having gone thither to enjoy the flowers, M'Coll to verify some doubts that had arisen in his mind regarding Nature's genius in the disposal of her colours.

M'Coll had arrived before Steer, and after many hours of close scrutiny and meditation, he walked convinced of many false shades in the peonies ; some few roses might be allowed to pass, but the too florid abundance of the Gloire de Dijon clouded his brow, and feeling, no doubt, that Steer's unconsidered admiration of the parterres and the urns might provoke a remark that would jar their friendship, he bade his friend good-bye. But Steer, unable to hide his surprise at this sudden dismissal, clung to the critic, and the critic, feeling perhaps that it would not be right to leave the great painter in ignorance of the vulgarities he had discerned, took him round the beds and urns, Steer giving his whole mind to the disquisition, losing, however, many points which he regretted losing, so he explained to us one night. There is always something in what M'Coll says, though it is difficult to get at it ; all the same—— And then his sense of humour coming to the rescue, he admitted with sweet, unemphasised voice that he was willing to hear all M'Coll had to say against the Greek vases, but thought the flowers might be allowed to pass without reproof.

One of M'Coll's works is a large book on Greek vases, written in conjunction with a lady. Of the wealth of information displayed in this book and of the subtlety of the writing, I have no doubt, and very little that the Greek potters were plucked as clean as the parrot that fell into the monkey's hands ; and that were the graves opened and the dust allowed to speak, the potters would cry, like the parrot : He's given us a hell of a time ! Ah ! these Scotch fellows ; it is very hard to come to terms with them. I understand Englishmen and Frenchmen, but the Scotsman bewilders me, and of all,

William Archer, who looks upon Pinero's play, *Mid-Channel*, as a remorseless (*sic*) masterpiece. And one night as I was sitting in a theatre listening to it, I bethought myself of Thomas, the sculptor, who was afflicted with a tape. It is not exactly pain, he would answer when we questioned about his guest: Rather a feeling of great discom*fort*. Fellow-sufferers, I said, and my thoughts returned to Archer, who answered me long years ago when I consulted him about the Independent Theatre: There is a fund of congenial commonplace in Pinero, that he will never be able to overcome. Did the writing of this remorseless masterpiece rid Sir Arthur of his congenital commonplace? or have Archer's perceptions grown a little blunted? Two men cannot be more different than M'Coll and Archer, and yet—and yet, are they not akin? Extremes are said to meet. I will tell a story.

Steer buys Greek coins; the fact has already been mentioned in his portrait, but perhaps I have forgotten to say that he buys for the pleasure he takes in their beauty, without thought of acquiring personal distinction thereby. He even neglects to speak of the coins until he meets somebody to whom he knows their beauty will appeal, and it is not long ago that he drew from his waistcoat pocket a gold piece the size of a raspberry, minted in the reign of Philip of Macedon, and of such beauty that I was transported. But why do you carry it in your pocket? I asked. He did not answer, and it was not till the next day, mayhap some days later, that I learnt why he carried the coin in his pocket: because he was unwilling to separate himself at once from his treasure. It was his as long as it was in his pocket, to be enjoyed when he was alone, to be enjoyed in company if he judged his company to be capable of enjoying the treasure, for when coins go into their little drawers they become abstractions, thoughts, rather than personal friends. A watch on the counter is not the same as a watch in our fob. I am afraid I am labouring a very obvious point, and had better

get on with my story, saying that not many weeks later in the very room over my head, in my drawing-room, the conversation took a turn that recalled Steer's coin to my mind. Tonks and M'Coll were present; neither had seen it, and I broke into regrets, which were interrupted by Steer. I have the coin in my pocket, he said, handing it to me. A dream of old Greece, I answered, passing the coin on to Tonks, and whilst he sat lost in admiration of Steer's taste, M'Coll's brow clouded; and when the coin was passed on to him he told us in solemn tones that he looked upon the chariot and charioteer as good on the whole, but that the design overfilled the coin, a mistake that would not have been made if the mintage had occurred a hundred years earlier. The head on the obverse of the coin was dismissed as commonplace, and we were glad that the remark was made when the hands of the clock pointed to eleven. Tonks mentioned that a heavy day's work awaited him; and I judged it fortunate that Tonks and Steer's way was not M'Coll's, for Tonks might not have been able to subdue himself. M'Coll might have received a severe reproof, might even have been asked: By what right do you call Steer's taste into question? An outrage it certainly was that Steer's taste should have been called into question, but a minor outrage. The major outrage, in my opinion, was the calling of the taste of Greece into question, Macedonian Greece, it is true, but still Greece. Yet M'Coll got a first at Oxford, likewise the Newdigate; his water-colours are not lacking in taste, and the worst that can be said is that sometimes his taste is a little overdone. The word taste brought up the whole bitterness again, and until I fell asleep I pondered a long correspondence in which M'Coll and some other Scotsman, possibly William Archer, should debate the question of rhythm in composition till the Editor is discovered dead in his chair.

Here endeth the fifth portrait.

CHAP. XII

MAID. Mrs. Harley-Caton's carriage is at the front door sir.

MOORE. And Mrs. Harley-Caton ?

MAID. In her carriage, sir.

MOORE. Did you ask the footman if she had an appointment ?

MAID. Yes, sir. He said that Madam had written to you yesterday.

MOORE. Ah, yes ; now I remember. But there's no fire in the drawing-room. Will you show her in here.

MAID. Mrs. Harley-Caton.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. I wrote to you two years ago, and you replied saying that you would see me, but before your letter came I had left London.

MOORE. Yes, I remember quite well. Won't you sit down ? The arms of this chair are an invitation.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Are you sure you remember ? Your letter followed me to Paris, and I wrote——

MOORE. I was embarrassed for a moment, but since I have had time to collect my thoughts all the circumstances have returned to me.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Madame Debray gave me a letter of introduction.

MOORE. And you wrote from Paris saying that next time you were in London you would avail yourself of my invitation. You see, I have forgotten nothing. Madame Debray is a very old friend of mine. And now that all the preliminaries are settled we can talk. Have you seen Madame Debray since you returned to London ?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON : I arrived from America last week, and have not yet had time to call on her.

MOORE. When you do you will not fail to remind her that she owes me a visit.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. I shall not fail to do so.

MOORE. Perhaps you can tell me if she is writing a new book ?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. She does not speak to me about her writings. We talk instead of your books, and she says that you are exactly like your books.

MOORE. Are not all writers like their books ? We have only got one brain, and all our thoughts come out of it.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. You described Walter Pater as wearing a mask, and added that your friendship declined because he would not drop it.

MOORE. Your questions are searching.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Do you not like searching questions ?

MOORE. I do. But is the object of your visit to put searching questions to me—an interview ?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. I am not a journalist, neither professional nor amateur. I have never written in the newspapers, and have come to see you because your books have thrown open a window.

MOORE. Indeed, you flatter me.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. If I do so it is because I could not do otherwise. May I ask if many of your books were written in this room, among these pictures, in the quiet light of Ebury Street ?

MOORE. Yes, in the quiet light of a long, lack-lustre street.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Yet you must be very happy here in your bachelor life spinning your webs.

MOORE. A Greek philosopher said : Call no man happy until he is dead, but I say unto you : Describe no visit as pleasurable until it is over !

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. My visit has only just begun.

MOORE. I hope it will last a long time. My secretary has just gone out to lunch.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. I have read nearly all your books.

MOORE. It is unwise to read many books lest each book should undo the bondage of the book that precedes it

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. May we not trust our instincts to retain and to reject?

MOORE. We may, for we must. But too much reading freezes the mind; we should be careful to leave time for meditation. I have often wondered what will become of the human race when it has ceased to meditate.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Those who have no thoughts worth thinking read a great deal.

MOORE. My friend, Edmund Gosse, has often said that there is usually some truth in what I say, and would agree with me that whosoever would make a success of his life should read little.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. The man of letters surely——

MOORE. The man of letters reads his proofs; sufficient for the day——

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Is the evil thereof! Your books revealed your turn of mind to me; I was curious to learn the man who is behind the books, and I have come to you unable to forego my purpose.

MOORE. You have come to fulfil a purpose? May I ask——

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Are you unaware how intimately you appear to us in your writings?

MOORE. I never thought of it.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. And if you had sought the quality which attracts us it would have become by this time a mere literary trick.

MOORE. Mayhap you are destroying at this very moment the quality that brought you hither.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. I had a friend, an actress, and I told her how wonderful was her entrance in a certain scene, and for ever afterwards her entrance was stiff and mannered.

MOORE. So you are speaking out of experience; yet you come here regardless of the injury your criticisms might do me!

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. A strange world indeed it would be

if knowledge derived from our experiences determined our every act.

MOORE. True. Life makes and unmakes us, and to lock ourselves into a tower would be suicide.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. You are too instinctive a human being to be turned aside by anything I can say. But it is hard to believe that you have written all your books without considering their appeal to the reader.

MOORE. I have heard something like that before, and perhaps have been influenced, and evilly influenced.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Do you like speaking about your books ?

MOORE. I confide my books to everybody, and so they build themselves up in the world.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. What is the title of your new book ?

MOORE. *Conversations in Ebury Street.*

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. An excellent title, and just like you.

MOORE. I am glad you like it—a book of conversations with my literary friends, broken with portraits of my painting friends, those with whom I spend my evenings.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. The men with whom you pass your evenings ! But do you never pass your evenings with a woman ?

MOORE. You have touched, Mrs. Harley-Caton, on a sore point. There is not one woman in my new book, and I have been thinking of another book of conversations in which all my interlocutors shall be women.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. A very happy idea, and one I hope you'll not lose sight of. Will it be your next book ?

MOORE. The thought only came into my mind yesterday, and with it the project for a conversation, but I shall have to meet a fine and subtle interlocutor to carry it out.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. May I ask how the project shapes itself in your mind ?

MOORE. You may indeed, for are you not already part author of the project, having reminded me of yesterday's

thought? And it is not likely that I shall find a more subtle collaborator or one more competent, for you are an educated, thoughtful woman, one who has considered the many various theories with which man has burdened life without, however, influencing his practice of life. The years of adolescence are little more than an omnipresent sensuality, but when a young man reaches the age of six or seven-and-twenty without marrying, he begins to think of love.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. And how long do you think, Mr. George Moore, that a man's love can last?

MOORE. You have read *Héloïse and Abélard?*

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. I am afraid——

MOORE. You haven't read the book. I am sorry.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Should I have come here better prepared to hear you if I had read the book?

MOORE. The word instruction is implicit in the sentence you have just spoken. I am not one of those whose pretensions are to train, adapt and curtail.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Can the teacher do no more for the pupil than to prune?

MOORE. The individual unfolds instinctively or not at all, as the world did in the twelfth century, culture returning after centuries of absence, and it is to man's great honour that his first thought was the redemption of love from the promiscuousness of marriage.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. From the materialism of marriage.

MOORE. Promiscuousness and materialism are interchangeable terms in the subject we are discussing. On his way to the cloister in search of spiritual raptures it befell Jaufre Rudel to raise his eyes to the walls of a castle, and beholding a face at a high lattice the truth was revealed to him that the worship of saints and angels may be exchanged for the worship of an imprisoned lady. The trouvère rode on, his life exalted and purified, with no thought in him to win her, for won she would be as other women are. Our need, he said, slackening the bridle and allowing his horse to take his own

pace, is a princess far away ; and these words becoming the theme of a song, he sang them all his life, and the song coming down to us, shapes the imagination of every young man of finer spiritual temper than his comrades. Moved by the same need as Rudel, he seeks to find the princess far away in a married woman, and he dreams of her in a corner of a circumspect, low-ceilinged saloon where silken curtains fill with airs blown in from the park.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. You speak like a book.

MOORE. I hope you will forgive me for having allowed the page that lies on the table to drift into the conversation.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. You are writing again about the trouvères !

MOORE. What was I saying, or what were you saying ?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. I see I have disarranged your thoughts ; but you will pick up the thread presently. You were saying when I interrupted you that love was redeemed from the grossness of marriage.

MOORE. In the twelfth century the seed was sown, and we have reaped the harvest in every country in Europe.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Not in Turkey.

MOORE. In Turkey women are still slaves, but their liberation is not far off.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. And when the twelfth century triumphs in Turkey the sex-slavery of women will be ended, and for ever ?

MOORE. The beginning and end of things are hidden from us. We know only that everything is being reformed, reshapen, but never wholly remade. The Church strove to make love eternal by placing the beloved on the other side of life, from whence, leaning over the golden bar of heaven (if I may borrow a phrase from Rossetti), she looks down on her adorer—if I were a cynic I might say on her adorers. But Jaufre Rudel discovered the lady in the castle to be a delectable equivalent for the slim angel in paradise, and rode away, as I have said, his life purified, exalted.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. The troubadours were not always innocent lovers.

MOORE. The doctrine that our quest should be always the princess far away is not disproven or discredited by the casual sinner; nor was it by its chief protagonist when he sailed to Tripoli—it would have been had the knight lived with the princess in wedlock, but he died in her arms, confirming his doctrine with his death. Rudel's doctrine, I repeat, is firmly established in the heart of man, which never changes. But the world is always at change; barriers disappear. The railway and the aeroplane have annihilated distance; the telegraph by day and the telephone by night have made the life of lovers promiscuous as marriage, and noble stories are replaced by chambering talk and popping in and out of bedrooms.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Are you engaged on a love story?

MOORE. I have searched modern life for the best substitute for the knight, and have discovered nothing better than a King's Messenger, constantly on the move from Italy to Holland, from Holland to Paris, Switzerland, Sweden or Norway. The lady would have to invent excuses for travelling in many different directions; she dare not prolong her visit, and such brief intervals as these would allow time for brooding, anxiety and dreams for both. Can you, Mrs. Harley-Caton, think of anybody more suitable than a King's Messenger? Your face assumes a meditative cast.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Wouldn't a priest be better?

MOORE. I hadn't thought of a priest. For many reasons a priest would make a satisfactory lover. Have you had any experience of priests as lovers?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. All my lovers have been priests.

MOORE. All? How very extraordinary!

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. The cassock appeals to me.

MOORE. But you know that under the cassock there is a man as ordinary as another.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. A strange remark from one who

writes about Jaufre Rudel. For who should know better than you that we do not live by knowledge but by illusion? Never is it the man that we love, but the mirage that our imagination creates——

MOORE. On the desert plains of life!

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Illusion is as potent to-day as it was in the twelfth century. A young woman at the theatre sees Philip Jackson enter in black hose. He wears a plumed hat, and the ramparts of Elsinore tower above him.

MOORE. True, how true! Elsinore! The name is enough; the text is superfluous.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Philip Jackson is no longer a mere male, and the young woman thinks that if she invites him to luncheon or to tea he will tell her of the strange windings his thought took before Hamlet was born in him. He tells her nothing, but the illusion of the hose and the plumed hat, and as you say, the magic word, Elsinore, remains.

MOORE. I came to teach, and I have been taught—a common experience, which allows the pupil to put a question to the master-mistress. Have you suffered from the scarlet fever?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Not since childhood. To the black I am still susceptible!

MOORE. I had little thought whilst shaving this morning that I should receive such a visitor, one so unexpected.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. A man's best thoughts come to him whilst he shaves, so I have heard.

MOORE. Very likely they do. But I cannot think of my inspirations whilst shaving, only of you and your first catching of the black fever.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. I would interest you, and I could do so had I words to tell of the madness that overtakes us at sixteen. I was a very romantic child, eager to read all the literatures, French, English, Italian, choosing Italian when my mother asked me which language I would learn. I expected her to disapprove, for she had disapproved of so

many aspirations before this last one, and to my surprise she chose a young Italian priest to teach me. It was very rash of her, but she was engaged in a love affair of her own and had no care for me. We read the Italian poets together, Dante, Tasso, Petrarch——

MOORE. Did you read Boccaccio ?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. No. My priest-lover was a young man, and respected my mother's trust in him. We visited many museums ; we discussed pictures and statues. The excitement of those walks will never be forgotten by me. At sixteen to walk alone with a man and to listen to him, to look in the shops as we go by, and to hear adventures from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, is enough.

MOORE. I would hear of the moment in which you see him clearly when you look back.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. I wore a flowered dress and a hat that everybody admired as I went by. He was sitting on a bench under some trees, and I remember him rising from the bench when he saw me approach.

MOORE. And your words were ?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. I felt a great deal and thought very little till he recited an Italian poem.

MOORE. One of his own poems ?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. He didn't say so, nor was it necessary that he should, for I was in love with him, and love associates all beautiful things with the beloved.

MOORE. And the poem spoken in the Italian language under the rustling trees was the wonderful moment. Can you remember it ?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Yes :

La Contessa

Dobbiam, pria che ci colga la frescura
questo castello ritrovar nel bosco.
('I musicanti cominciano ad accordare gli istrumenti)
Buona donna, pel cembalo e per l'arpa

biasimo non mi dar : 'm'hanno ordinato
che fuggissi il terror dei tempi tristi
di musiche cingendomi e soavi
canti : 'se no, mi struggerebbe il duolo.
Ho smarrita la strada. Alìl, il vate,
ch'esperto esser dovria di questi boschi,
poi che testé il trovammo al loro lembo,
che vagava cantando, alla maniera
della spuma del mar, di visioni
è sì ricinto di terror ventuti,
che giovardi non può.
Moria (accompagnandola all'uscio)
Di etro i nocciòli,
un sentier verde, ombroso, al vostro grande
castello va per le maligne selve.
Alìl
Andati noi, mettete il chiavistello
all'uscio, però che sul nostro capo,
fino a mezz'ora fa, che li perdemmo,
chiurlarono due assïoli grigi
presagi di terror. Cembalo ed arpa
destatevi ! Se il mondo anche ci sfugge
come un sospir, la musica è signora
di quante cose sono sotto la luna.
Sonate : " Il vento soffia a Cummen Strand . . ."
('Musica. Alìl canta :)
Silenzio, impetüoso core ;
narrar non dèssi la tua ria fortuna ;
coprila d'una solinga canzone.
Chi tutte cose piega alla sua voglia
celò dell'infinito ovil la soglia
con le pallide stelle e con la luna.

Moore. I have very little Italian, but from a few words and from the rhythm I guess the poem to be a translation of a well-known Irish poem.

Mrs. Harley-Caton. I shall never love anybody again as I loved him, and shall never forget him, for we all remember our youth. It is so beautiful, and it passes so quickly. He never kissed me, never even pressed my hand. But what interest can all this be to you ?

Moore. Nothing in human nature is alien from me, said a Latin, and he spoke for me, born two thousand years later.

Mrs. Harley-Caton. I married soon after.

Moore. And during your married life you never met this young priest again ?

Mrs. Harley-Caton. No. And I am almost glad that I never did, for he would have been quite different and I should have been different.

Moore. Your philosophy comes like a cold breeze through the sunshine ; but I dare say you are right Did you have any other priest for a lover ?

Mrs. Harley-Caton. Yes ; two more.

Moore. And the next one was . . . ?

Mrs. Harley-Caton. A Monseigneur. I met him on the steamer crossing from New York to Havre.

Moore. And caught the black fever again !

Mrs. Harley-Caton. He wore no cassock, but there was a touch of purple at the throat, and after dinner we walked on deck and became friendly. There was a certain reserve, of course ; one does not speak to a priest exactly as one does to another man. We met again in Paris (he was a Frenchman), and he said he would like to show me France. We travelled, stopping at the same hotels, and I often wondered how it was that he dared to travel so openly with me.

Moore. And it was in one of these hotels one night——

Mrs. Harley-Caton. No. I am running one incident into another. It was not in Compiègne but in Paris that he first made love to me—at a dress rehearsal. I suppose you know that the presence of priests in clerical dress is forbidden in French theatres ; but a dress rehearsal is not looked upon

as an ordinary performance, and after sitting in the theatre for four hours or more we could bear it no longer. Before you come to the entrance of the theatre—do you know the Odéon? Between the swing doors there is a corner. He put his arms round me, and on our way back to our hotel his voice broke the silence abruptly. And just as if he had heard my thoughts, which were: why does he keep himself aloof? he began to tell me that he had refrained till now because of an attachment that dated back many years. He spoke of certain rights that this woman had upon him——

MOORE. Had he any children by her?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. I think not; he would have told me if he had. It was an attachment that once had been ardent love, but it had weakened, he said, developing (if you can call it a development) into a friendship, a very true friendship, but no more than a friendship. I was willing to believe, for I was in love with him, and as he continued telling me how the chain had loosened, I looked forward to the time when he would not see her any more.

MOORE. How long did this love last?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. For about two years.

MOORE. And how did it end?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. He was a weak man and had not been able to break with her (the other woman), and after our return to America I discovered that the attachment had been renewed—I don't say altogether; one never knows; but he lied to me, as I learnt from another priest. I said: You saw So-and-so the other day at ——. I must be careful not to say anything that would give you a clue, for he is a great personage in the ecclesiastical world.

MOORE. It is the man that attracts me, the man and the priest, and I do not seek—indeed I would avoid any knowledge of the individual. He had gone to attend the opening of a cathedral, or to some public dinner, perhaps?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. We will assume it was a public dinner.

I said: You saw So-and-so at the dinner? and the priest answered: He was not there. Are you sure he was not there? I asked, and he replied: Quite sure. I wrote that night and he came to see me next day to assure me that all he had said in France was the truth, but he had not been able to break with the other woman as he had intended. As I have said, he was a weak man.

MOORE. And you saw him no more?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. No. We have not seen each other since.

MOORE. Now, will you tell me how you met the third priest?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. I don't mind telling you about myself, but I don't wish to say anything that would compromise others.

MOORE. But to tell me how you met him doesn't give me any clue as to who he is.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. No, I won't tell you how we met. The incident was so strange, so exceptional, that it might seem to you just the very thing out of which to fashion a story, and if the story came under his notice it would wound him terribly.

MOORE. You can say whether you met him in a picture gallery or in a cathedral.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. I should have thought you could invent something less commonplace.

MOORE. Well, it did cross my mind that you might have been troubled in your conscience. We are all liable to scruples of conscience, and certain impulses which seemed to you once quite natural might have begun to seem like sins. You might have hastened to a church, and in the confessional . . .

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. That is quite a good idea. I once told my second lover that I would confess to him all our misdeeds.

MOORE. And what did he say?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. He said he wouldn't hear my confession.

MOORE. If I understand the man rightly, he was not a Tartuffe who believed occasionally when he was alone and temptation was far away, becoming a doubter with the advent of every new temptation, a sort of sincere hypocrite.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. He must have believed once.

MOORE. Did he never confide to you his religious scruples and how he overcame them?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. No. We avoided all religious questions. I knew they would disturb him and I put none.

MOORE. But you said just now that you once proposed to confess to him.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Yes. But his face darkened, and smiling a little bitterly he said: I should prefer you to choose some other confessor.

MOORE. He did not forbid you to go to church?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. The Church was always left out of the conversation, especially the Protestant Church. But he didn't forbid me to attend the Catholic Church. I told him that I liked to hear music, and where he often officiated the best music was heard. He had a lovely voice, and looked well in his vestments. I gave him vestments that suited him still better—why are you laughing?

MOORE. I was not laughing. It seems so strange . . .

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. But why? Every woman likes to see her priest well dressed, whether she be sinner or saint. Are you a Christian?

MOORE. I am a devout follower of Paul.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. And of Peter?

MOORE. I accept Jesus's view of Peter without troubling myself further. I have no religious faith. My faith is altogether literary, and if you will allow me, we will return to your third lover, to the London priest.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. I did not say he was a London priest, nor did I say he was in London.

MOORE. I do not wish to hear his name or to see his photograph, but I'd like to know that he existed in some town or place. It wasn't in a picture gallery, it wasn't in a church——

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. I can say this much. He was sitting on one side of a room, I on the other, and the moment our eyes met we were attracted.

MOORE. And do you think that this love will outlast Monseigneur ?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. We met only four times as lovers, and as I sat thinking of him one afternoon (I was expecting him at five), I heard the bell ring. My face lighted up, but dimmed as quickly, for I read his face truly. Something has happened ! I said to myself, and he sat down without even taking my hand. I thought he was going to burst into tears, but he was quite calm. He said that he had been walking about all night, and what was uncertain before had become a fixed idea. He now knew that he couldn't play a double part and would have to give up the priesthood or me And you have chosen, I asked, to give me up ? He answered : Many priests before me have sinned. There is nothing extraordinary in sin ; it is even very ordinary ; we do not lose heaven because we sin, but because we fail to repent. He offered me his friendship, but I shook my head, and I think he was glad I had refused his friendship, for he felt that only one relation was possible between us.

MOORE. And you have not seen him since ?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Yes. I found myself face to face with him in Oxford Street one evening. We turned into a side street and he put his arms about me, but I felt that he was without strength of purpose.

MOORE. We are all weak and should be thankful for our weaknesses, for they are what is most human in us.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. A pleasant philosophy, and one that suits you.

MOORE. You have told me a good deal about yourself, and to recompense you——

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. You will tell me something about yourself, your weaknesses?

MOORE. I was not thinking of myself but of you, of confiding a thought that has come to me.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. About me?

MOORE. Yes. I am thinking which of these two men you loved the better.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Which do you think?

MOORE. The man who cast you off for the sake of his vows you loved better than you did the man whose pleasure with you was that of the flesh.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. The French priest was not a good man, but the other was.

MOORE. The good and the evil attract in turn. You loved both in different ways. The personalities of these men attracted you, but I think if you had not met them you would have met others.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Other priests?

MOORE. Yes, for the class attracts you. We are drawn first by the class and afterwards by the individual.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. Yes, I think that is so. The young Italian with whom I read poetry biased my mind in favour of the priesthood. A priest inspires a certain curiosity.

MOORE. He does indeed. He is the needed barrier of which we have already spoken in this conversation. We cannot desire what we possess, and love without desire is materialism. I see it all. The great twelfth century discovered the needed barrier in the husband, the twentieth has discovered it in the priest, and in these ages of declining faith a new career is open to him.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. We have talked a long time. My coachman is asleep and my horses are catching cold. I must bid you good-bye. I thank you for having listened to me.

MOORE. And I thank you for your confidences. But our

interview has been all talk. You haven't seen my house or the pictures in it. Won't you come upstairs to the drawing-room and see my little collection ?

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. What have you got to show me ?

MOORE. A beautiful Manet, and a Morisot that is the justification of your sex.

MRS. HARLEY-CATON. I think my sex can justify itself. But I'll see your pictures.

CHAP. XIII

The saints of the Middle Ages speak of their sufferings when Jesus withdrew himself from them, and when we follow art too closely, too greedily, forgetting all things for art's sake, Apollo in his wisdom deserts us. It was so in the hot month of August last year. Theocritus and Landor were laid aside, and I said : It would seem that we must not seek relief in our own art but in a sister art ; and I fell to thinking how, to escape from myself, I had left my house a quarter of a century ago to attend a performance of *Lohengrin*, which despite its mediocrity sent me home exultant all the way from the Shaftesbury Theatre through the Park to Victoria Street. And Apollo having again withdrawn himself during my exile in Dublin, I said : Why sit staring at the lamp till midnight ? Some amateurs are performing *The Doll's House*. Why not go to see the mess they'll make of it ? And faults there were to find, no doubt, but I keep no memory of them, only of the exultant happiness in which I returned home, walking as if on air past Merrion Square to Ely Place. If I were a king I would keep a company of singers and players rehearsed sufficiently to go on at a moment's notice ; but I am a poor composer in Ebury Street, with no refuge but sleep from those terrible moments when the God withdraws himself. And on the hot Sunday I am telling, an August afternoon last year, I laid myself out in my armchair and slept fitfully, roused towards six o'clock by the clock striking or by

some half-dream, half-thought, I know not which. In an hour, I said, Clara will come to lay the cloth. Mabel has gone for her holidays. . . . And whilst waiting for the clock to strike the half-hour, I fell asleep again, and from this second sleep I was awakened by the clinking of spoons and forks in the passage. Clara asked me if I were not feeling well. I answered: Although in good health and strength, I am conscious that life is ebbing from me. Clara made no answer, and to break the silence that fell, I asked what dinner she had devised. Some fried cod, sir. Clara, I could not eat cod this evening. Boiled—she began. Speak not of it, Clara; and what comes after the . . . ? Cutlets, sir. Clara, I have been feeling tired all the afternoon, and would like to dine at a restaurant. Well, sir, the cutlets will keep till to-morrow. To-morrow must look after itself, I said, and now if I could find my hat. With Clara's assistance the hat was found, and I walked rapidly to Sloane Square, thinking that perhaps in the Queen's Restaurant I might meet the familiar mummers from the theatre; but none was at the reserved table, and whilst regretting their absence I allowed myself to be enticed by the bill of fare. Mulligatawny was chosen, for I needed something tasty, and it was barely eaten when a picturesque figure, a cross between a Scottish laird and a Spanish hidalgo, in fine, a shadow of Don Quixote thrown across the screen of this modern world, entered.

Cunninghame Graham! I said, and was about to ask him to sit at my table when he proposed to do so, which was better than if he had acceded to my request; for his wish to sit with me relieved me of my doubts lest I should prove a wearisome companion, a vain fear, for no one wearies in his company. He ordered soup, but which? *Croûte au pot*! it was certainly *croûte au pot*; but I do not recall the fish he ate, remembering, however, and distinctly, that I asked him if the lamb was worth eating. Barely, he answered, and taking the hint I did not follow him into lamb, but ordered a grilled sole and *une omelette Lyonnaise*, after which I had

some strawberries, and these I did not dilute with cream, according to the English custom, but poured a little claret upon. *Un souvenir de Montmartre*, he said. And as we approached the coffee a plan began to mature in my mind: I would invite him to 121, Ebury Street, and enjoy for an hour the soul of a hidalgo. He consented; and so sensible was I of conversing with old Spain that it vexed me to remember on our way to Ebury Street that I had only cigars to offer a man who, as all the world knows, speaks Spanish like Don Quixote and has lived most of his life amid tribes, retaining, in spite of many various idioms and languages, a firm hold of the English language. A real Scottish grip he has of it, as anybody can see for himself who—but more of that anon.

Cunninghame Graham has lived with the gauchos, and to see him was enough to stress in imagination the cows, steers, bulls, even the fleet llamas, brought to earth with the whirling bolus or the encircling lasso; and the surety with which he speaks of these facts leaves no doubt in our minds that they were performed by him and will be performed again when the occasion calls for them. And from Sloane Square to Ebury Street, he continued to sit in my imagination with one leg round the pommel, half asleep—that is how the gauchos always sleep, themselves and their nags. And it was, I swear it, with no other purpose but to encourage him to tell me stories that would make a boy of me again, that I related my poor little experience of Arab horses that cannot trot, and the consequent fatigue of the journey from Jerusalem, and how, after a long search for a suitable monastery, we encamped in the arid desert which lies along the eastern coast of the Dead Sea. You know, Cunninghame Graham, what it is to awaken out of the shallow sleep of the bivouac and to ask whence you have come and whither you are going, or if it be your destiny to die among the sand-hills that the wind created yesterday and will uncreate to-morrow. You know the feeling? Do I know the feeling! he answered, and he spoke instantly of sitting round a blaze of dry bushes

gathered by gauchos, of the bird-like forms of grey llamas browsing in the moonlight, of rifles, pistols, and the whirling of boluses at a hand gallop, and that himself would match himself to bring down a cow at sixty yards with a bolus, or to lasso a wild horse at—the exact distance at which he could lasso a wild horse I did not learn that evening, for my guest relinquished his tale of wild horses for an amusing story of a man in Hyde Park, who, after seeing Cunninghame Graham catch a horse with a lasso, said : I defy you to catch me by the feet. My guest begged the man to believe that if he lassoed him he would get a heavy fall, but the man persisted, saying he could escape the noose. The lasso was thrown, and the man turned a summersault and looked round dazed, like a man who receives an upper-cut in a prize fight.

But even such stories come to an end, and our thoughts turned to the weather, and from it sprang the mental suffering that hot days bring to the civilised man who dozes in his armchair with a chapter of a book in his mind that he cannot compose. Alas, I was back at the source of my torment ; and, too feeble of mind to return to the size of the three balls, I told him I was writing a book to replace *Impressions and Opinions*. Would you mind being made use of ? I said. I have to write to-morrow, and to tell you how I propose to treat the subject will be a great help. You won't object, he answered, to my breaking in occasionally to add something if something should occur to me ? On the contrary, I said ; and you can count upon my gratitude for anything you may be able to say about Verlaine and Rimbaud ; any impression you have gotten from their poetry I shall be able to develop. All I want is a hint, something from the outside ; within I am wasted and weary of their names. I shall run the hint that you let drop like a hound a scent, but I really cannot bring myself to write again that Verlaine's verses flow like a wistful brook, and that Rimbaud's sound like a clarion heard in the aspiring woods of Ville D'Avray. The suppressed book is full of that kind of thing. In these

circumstances, said Cunninghame Graham, you cannot do better than omit the articles. I cannot omit the articles, for it was I who introduced these poets to England and very nearly to France. If I do not get a hint from the outside I shall produce another article that might be published in a review, and for title : *Certain Aspects of the Genius of Verlaine and Rimbaud* will do. So many aspects of Henry James's genius have been published that the Editor will welcome the title again, and the rather if I say nothing in twelve pages. It is astonishing how many young men there are of this generation all wanting to write about the arts, and who go on writing about them without finding out that they have nothing to say. More extraordinary still, said Cunninghame Graham, are the men who produce a masterpiece between twenty and thirty and live for half a century in the fading glories of it. Rimbaud was just such a one, I answered. He produced a masterpiece at eighteen, and then retired to Abyssinia to drive camels. Books are read in modern times not for what is in them but for the sake of the author's sexual eccentricities, said the subtle hidalgo, and after listening to me for some time he asked me how I connected Rimbaud's literary sterility with Verlaine, who continued to write beautiful poems to the end of his life. I answered that Verlaine's and Rimbaud's names are linked together by their attachment for each other, physically and intellectually ; and we spoke of the shooting affray in Brussels, and Verlaine's imprisonment for attempted murder. And then we talked at random till Cunninghame Graham remembered Rimbaud's enlistment under the banner of Don Carlos, and his immediate desertion with the money he had received ; but he could not recall the circumstance in which he had enlisted under the Dutch flag for service in Java, merely the fact that no sooner had the ship touched port than he deserted again. We were agreed that he had worked his passage to England as an interpreter ; we lost and we picked up the scent again when he sailed for Alexandria ; and seeing him in our imagination

in Egypt on a camel on his way to Abyssinia, Cunninghame Graham said: If you had chosen to write a novel about Rimbaud you would have had to travel in Abyssinia in search of local colour. It seems to me, my dear Cunninghame Graham, that if I were to follow Rimbaud into Abyssinia I should be going over old ground instead of breaking new. Rimbaud did not write any account of his travels, Cunninghame Graham answered, and if you are not going to discuss Verlaine's poetry, nor his relations with Rimbaud and with Lucien Létinois, your narrative will perforce be restricted to an account of Verlaine's religious emotions and experiences. You will attribute his conversion and *Sagesse* to his imprisonment in Mons, but will this be the truth? I doubt if Verlaine was ever converted, certainly not to theology. You feel, Cunninghame Graham, that there was nothing Scotch in Verlaine, and though he would have liked your grey skies and rainy days, he would have wilted in argument whether the Ghost proceeded from the Father and the Son or from the Father alone. His attachment, said Cunninghame Graham, to religion was stinted to stained-glass windows and the Pope's Indulgences, and these, strangely enough, did not prevent his robbing his mother of money to give to Lucien Létinois—rushing at her, knife in hand. To my mind, Verlaine's claim to distinction among immoralists is neither Arthur nor Lucien but his remarkable exemption from any moral instincts whatsoever.

You forget, Cunninghame Graham, that there are as many moralities as there are creeds. I beg your pardon, answered my hidalgo: moral instincts. Forgetting, I answered, that beauty is a morality, and that Verlaine never deviated from the only morality he was aware of. Of how many poets can you say as much? And is it certain that poems as beautiful as Verlaine's are a less potent influence for good than sleepy sermons and the administration of the common law? His vices were his own and died with him. You asked me, said Cunninghame Graham, to raise objections and I have raised

one, which you have answered. I am glad you think I have. I will raise another, for you have encouraged me. If Verlaine's sense of beauty could not save him from vice I fail to see why it should save others. Because beauty is in the end a more powerful influence than evil. The theologian hidden in every Scotsman begins to appear, I answered, but I think I can give a better reason. Few men are divided into halves. Verlaine is an exception, one that you will find hard to match ; and I think you will agree with me that if Verlaine be judged by his mind only, the judgment will be nearer the truth than if he were judged by his acts. My dear Moore, do you think you can show Verlaine's daily life to be wholly absent from his poems ? Verlaine, I replied, did not deviate from his morality ; no matter the theme, the morality is the same always :

> Ame, te souvient-il, au fond du paradis,
> De la gare d'Auteuil et des trains de jadis
> T'amenant chaque jour, venus de La Chapelle,

and ending with the strange enchantment of the line :

> Mon pauvre enfant, ta voix dans le Bois de Boulogne !

And there is the sonnet to Parsifal, written when he was lying ill in the Cour Saint-François, 6 Hôtel du Midi, rue Moreau, whither I went with Dujardin, who was then editing the *Revue Wagnérienne* ; and had I not gone I should have missed the hint that inspired this paper—a paper not one word of which is written, and which may never be written. I am not certain that what I have in mind is realisable. Do you never, Cunninghame Graham, find yourself in the end deluded ?

> Gods and men, we are all deluded thus.
> We pursue a maiden, and clasp a reed.

How does it go on? But cease to trouble your memory. I shall never be able to put this double life upon paper. I would tell how the discrepancies came together, to live and to die together, inseparable and yet for ever divided. Will you have a cigar, Cunninghame Graham? No, thank you; I never smoke cigars. Ah! I had forgotten. Of course, a Spaniard never did, never will, never could. What were we talking about? You were telling me about going forth with a man called Dujardin to seek Verlaine, who was lying ill. Ah, yes, in search of the sonnet to Parsifal which Verlaine had promised Dujardin, and which appeared in the *Revue Wagnérienne*, of that I am sure. So it must have been in the early 'eighties, 'eighty-four or 'eighty-five, that Dujardin said to me: The sonnet has not arrived, and we are going to Press the day after to-morrow. But stay, Dujardin; you have told me that he lives in the Quartier du Temple, and I don't think I care—— You will rue your scruples when he is dead, Dujardin interrupted, and believing this to be true I followed him into an omnibus, and when we came to the terminus into a tram; a little later we changed trams, and the second took us past factories and canals. Are we going to take the boat? I asked; my friend laughed, and stopped to ask the bargeman if they knew the rue Moreau. The answers they gave did not help us, and for a long time we were lost in a tangle of noisy streets, in musty and clamorous courtyards, asking every passer-by to direct us to the Hôtel du Midi, which, when found, did not avail us much, for number six was as hard to discover as the hotel itself. We mounted many staircases, knocked at different doors, received new instructions; and so wearied were we with climbing that we could hardly believe our eyes when number six confronted us.

A boy with a face so rosy that he reminded me of a butcher-boy, opened to us, and among some dirty bedclothes we came upon Verlaine. His sinister eyes seemed to reflect the stony silence of the prison cell and yard, and his bald, prominent

forehead, his shaggy eyebrows, frightened me ; and Dujardin, too, was frightened when Verlaine offered to show us his leg, which he said was better but still gave him so much pain that he might have to return to the hospital. And he would have shown us his leg if he had not remembered as he was about to lift the bedclothes that his duty as a host was to offer us some wine. The butcher-boy went for a *litre*, and whilst we drank wine at sixteen *sous* the *litre* Verlaine watched us, amused by his joke, thinking it a better one on the whole than the first that had occurred to him—the turning of our stomachs by the exhibition of his leg. We were young and enthusiastic and hoped, luck having favoured us so far, that by drinking the wine we should persuade him to recite his sonnet to us. But the cat is not to be caught by mice, and Verlaine played with us, telling us that he would not deprive us of the pleasure of reading the sonnet by reciting it to us. We were glad to hear him say this, for the Revue needed something that all its readers would enjoy and approve. He spoke of a certain hiatus which appealed to his ear and a certain music outside the ordinary rhythm that our ears were doubtless weary of. We answered that his ear would allow no jarring note ; we were sure of that and refrained from expressing our doubts regarding the subject of the sonnet, for when he began to tell the subject he turned to the butcher-boy and described women as trash. And then he spoke of his son, whom he had not brought up as a *garçon de café*, though what trade, avouched Verlaine, was more advantage to a young man than that of a *garçon de café* ? Truly, no trade could have reduced a human being lower than Verlaine seemed to us at that moment, and unable to bear his society and that of the butcher-boy any longer, we departed, saying to ourselves : We shall not be able to publish the sonnet.

Here it is, said Dujardin to me the next day ; here is the sonnet which you have heard Verlaine speak of as autobiographical. You cannot publish it ! I cried. Listen, said

Dujardin, and now to you, Cunninghame Graham, I say the same : Listen :

Parsifal a vaincu les Filles, leur gentil
Babil et la luxure amusante—et sa pente
Vers la chair de garçon vierge que cela tente
D'aimer les seins légers et ce gentil babil.
Il a vaincu la Femme belle, au cœur subtil,
Étalant ses bras frais et sa gorge excitante ;
Il a vaincu l'Enfer et rentre sous la tente
Avec un lourd trophée à son bras puéril.

Avec la lance qui perça le Flanc suprême !
Il a guéri le roi, le voici roi lui-même
Et prêtre du très saint Trésor essentiel.

En robe d'or il adore, gloire et symbole,
Le vase pur où resplendit le sang réel.
—Et, ô ces voix d'enfants chantant dans la coupole !

The music of this poem lay dormant for centuries in the French language, so long that it seems archaic in modern speech. Did you never see Verlaine again ? Cunninghame Graham asked. Yes ; in *Memoirs of My Dead Life* I tell another meeting, and there was a third. My book, *Confessions of a Young Man*, was published in the *Revue Indépendante*, and Dujardin gave a luncheon. My old friend Mallarmé was present, and Verlaine, too, was there. Huysmans I do not remember, yet Dujardin could hardly have left him out. No one is a better host than Dujardin, he provides for everybody. Mary Laurent, of whom I speak in *Memoirs of My Dead Life* as *toute la lyre*, was present, and from the other end of the table she sent me messages with her eyes that the intrigue that had revelled years ago in Manet's studio was not forgotten and might be smoothed out and tied into a pretty bow at last ; and nothing loth for her to tie it, I

encouraged her with glances when I was not listening to Verlaine, in whose humble voice I could discover no trace of personal pride, yet he must have known even then that he was a great poet. In his conversation, as in his books, he was like the old woman in Villon's ballade, a poor Christian devoid of riches and all distinction, who believes and hopes to find grace hereafter with her Sovereign Lord and Master. Verlaine's name will always be linked with Villon's, and were Villon unknown to us who is there that would not swear that the refrain of the ballade :

Dans cette foie je veux vivre et mourir,

was a line of Verlaine's and to be found in *Sagesse* ?

CHAP. XIV

I tried to detain Cunninghame Graham, for I had not said half of what I had to say, but seeing at that moment that his eyes were heavy with sleep, I said : Since you must go, go without hearing the rest. Whereupon he spoke of exchanging books, he promising his travels in Morocco and I a copy of *The Brook Kerith*, which should be sent to him to-morrow. A moment after he disappeared in the moon haze, and sleep being still far from me, I laid myself out on the sofa in the drawing-room so that I might think more clearly ; but having no subject in mind I listened to the ticking of my pretty Louis seize clock and remembered that my aunt had bought it for me in Bond Street twenty years ago for twelve pounds ; one of my best bargains. After leaving the shop I was lucky enough to spy on the other side of the street two candelabra to match for sixteen pounds ; to be more truthful, it was my aunt who—but the story of these acquisitions is surely to be found in one of my autobiographical works, so I will not risk

repeating it here, but will content myself with saying that every time the bell of the clock rings I look up, to think, and not infrequently, of my dear aunt. One never wearies of pretty things, and if it had not been for all this writing I might have cultivated my taste and made a collection that would fetch a large sum of money at Christie's at my death. But literature absorbed me, and mayhap I got as much from it as I should have from a collection of Chelsea china and Louis seize clocks. I should have collected principally the eighteenth-century, for the genius of that century governs me throughout, except in poetry. Eighteenth-century poetry is trite, but triteness is preferable to free verse, for it would seem that free verse, having freed itself from rhyme and metre, finds itself, like many other anarchies, without anything to say, another claim of our world to ingenious paradox, freedom being obtainable only through remissions of freedom. . . . When next I go to France I shall perplex Dujardin and his little confraternity with the aphorism: Man must be enslaved, else he is impotent. They cannot do else than admire Verlaine, for he loosened the conventions of French verse, establishing, in conjunction with Banville, the right of the poet to two caesuras:

Il a vaincu la Femme belle, au cœur subtil,

and the still more audacious line:

En robe d'or il adore, gloire et symbole,

ending with a hiatus,

—Et, ô ces voix d'enfants chantant dans la coupole!

But why should they admire Rimbaud, whose verses are as orthodox as Hugo's, the Comte de l'Isle's, or Heredia's? Nor can their admiration for this poet be attributed to incoherency, for Rimbaud is as lucid as Gosse. Gosse makes fun

of the title *Le Bateau Ivre*, but a title may be ludicrous in English and admirable in French. We speak of a lurching boat and a lurching drunkard, and to speak of *Le Bateau Ivre* as *The Tipsy Boat* may be funny : but it is not good criticism, and Gosse would have done better to forgo his joke for the sake of the wonderful lines in which the poet recalls the savagery of the sea. I understand that Dujardin and his tribe should admire Laforgue more than Verlaine, for it was the genius of Laforgue that gave currency to free verse. But it is his prose that endears him to me :

Jamais, jamais, jamais cette petite ville d'eaux ne s'en douta, avec son inculte Conseil municipal délégué par des montagnards rapaces et nullement opéra-comique malgré leur costume.

Ah ! que tout n'est-il opéra-comique ! . . . Que tout n'évolue-t-il en mesure sur cette valse anglaise, *Myosotis*, qu'on entendait cette année-là (moi navré dans les coins, comme on pense) au Casino, valse si décemment mélancolique, si irréparablement derniers, derniers beaux jours ! . . . (Cette valse, oh ! si je pouvais vous en inoculer d'un mot le sentiment avant de vous laisser entrer en cette histoire !

O gants jamais rajeunis par les benzines ! O brillant et mélancolique va-et-vient de ces existences ! O apparances de bonheur si pardonnables ! O beautés qui vieilliront dans les dentelles noires, au coin du feu, sans comprendre la conduite des fils viveurs et musclés qu'elles mirent au monde avec une si chaste mélancolie ! . . .

Petite ville, petite ville de mon cœur.

Les Moralités Légendaires comes to me by right for translation, for am I not of his generation, or almost ? his contemporary, certainly. We read each other in the *Revue Indépendante*, the organ of the symbolists in the 'eighties. Moreover, there is a little of Laforgue in me ; in *The Lovers of Orelay* I am near to Laforgue in his story of Ruth, dying amid tea-roses, the blood-red having been forbidden to her and to her poet, whose end was the same as hers, nearer than

any other. He would have chosen me to translate him, wherefore why not? For never do I open *Les Moralités Légendaires* without a thrill. Ruth is unique in literature and I identify her with his wife, whom he met in Berlin skating, I am sure, for have I not written of the spell of her waist, of the flowing boa, and the feet lifted beneath the dark skirt, and how when the spell of these fell upon him he resigned his place as reader to the Empress, married, and brought his wife to Paris in the hope that literature would yield them a living. Dujardin published him; nobody else would. Jules caught the sickness from his wife, and the English girl passed between the rooms with *tisanes*. And many thanks are due to the few friends who climbed to see them on Thursday evenings. Needless to say that Dujardin was among them, and that he published *Les Moralités Légendaires*, the volume Jules left in his desk. Ruth did not survive her husband many months, and where she is buried nobody knows; nor shall I try to inquire out the facts but continue to cherish *L'Imitation de Notre Dame la Lune* and *Des Fleurs de bonne Volonté*. But whilst paying homage to Laforgue, Dujardin and his sodality pay equal homage to Baudelaire, whose aestheticism seems to have been formed in a street which, had I the naming of it, would not be called Rivoli but *rue Baudelaire*, so invincibly do its hookahs, long pipes with amber mouthpieces, pierced brass lamps, Turkey carpets, burning pastilles, amber beads and ivory, even the fez that the shopman wears, remind us of *Les Fleurs du Mal*; or I might name the street, if its renaming were left to me, *rue de la Camelote*, for all is false in the rue de Rivoli. And having made these changes in the locality, I would rename Baudelaire's volume *Fleurs de Camelote*, for is it not all rue de Rivoli —hookahs, pastilles, amber beads—more Turkish than Jerome and falser than he is even in his sculpture? It is true that when we were young men we purchased Turkish lamps made in Paris, and since those days we have lived in dread of the reproaches of the younger generation, pointing fingers at us

and crying : Baudelaire ! Hookah ! Turkish lamp ! Hookah ! But instead of making jeering-stocks of us as they might have done, the younger generation exalt Baudelaire above Hugo, above Gautier, above Banville, and decry De Musset, whose verses, it is true, are full of tags, but withal not such vulgar tags as Baudelaire's. And my thoughts pausing, I began to feel a smile creeping round my lips, and I fell to thinking how one night in the Val Changis Dujardin, in the company of a dozen or more poets, recited the sonnet in which I expressed my inability to visit him in 1920 because of *Héloïse and Abélard*.

La chair est bonne de l'alose
Plus fine que celle du bar,
Mais la Seine est loin et je n'ose
Abandonner Pierre Abélard.

Je suis un esclave de l'art ;
La très sage Héloïse pose
Sans robe, sans coiffe et sans fard,
Et j'oublie aisément l'alose.

Mais je vois la claire maison—
Arbres, pelouses et statue !
Dujardin, j'entends ta leçon :

Raison qui sauve, foi qui tue,
Autels éclaboussés du son
Que verse une idole abattue.

George Moore is the only visitor to the Val Changis who is allowed to follow the rules, cried Dujardin, but he must be reproved for filling an idol with sawdust ; such an indignity as to be filled with sawdust never befell an idol before, and it would not have happened now were it not for the needed rhyme. I have tried to revise the last lines for him, but the

words are not in the language. *Une poupée* will not do ; the word *idole* cannot be dodged. With gold, pearls, diamonds, almost anything but . . . On hearing from Marie of his criticism of my sonnet, I wrote : I will try to find three lines that please thee better. Not three, but two, he wrote to me.

> Mais je vois la claire maison—
> Arbres, pelouses et statue !
> Dujardin, j'entends ta leçon :
>
> Qu'enfin la Légende s'est tue,
> Car Pan est revenu des bois
> Dansant, son pipeau sous les doigts.

Thy tercets, old friend, are no longer based on two rhymes, he wrote. A reproach ill suited to one who repudiates rhyme altogether, I replied. My revised tercets are common, for I missed the inspiring influence of strict rhyming. But the argument in favour of free verse and the argument against it exceeded the time at our disposal, and it was not till this year that I asked the assembled tribe if it would cease to speak with reverence of *le marchand de Camelote* if I could discover fourteen faults in one of his sonnets. To which they gave no answer, but seemed anxious to hear my analysis of the sonnet :

La Mort des Amants

> Nous aurons des lits pleins d'odeurs légères,
> Des divans profonds comme des tombeaux.
> Et d'étranges fleurs sur des étagères,
> Écloses pour nous sous des cieux plus beaux.

I will not trouble you with all the reasons why lovers should lie in the same bed, but will ask you if two beds do not suggest an Hotel ; and having gotten his double-bedded room he found himself unable to escape from two divans, *tombeaux*

being the rhyming word. The third line is even worse than the first two, for nobody puts flowers, of the common or rare species, on *étagères* ; cups and saucers, yes, but flowers never, except in bad verses. And please to note that the strange flowers open under more beautiful skies ; but the fact that the flowers are placed on *étagères* does not enable us to explain how they open under more beautiful skies if we do not accept as an ellipse : *que les nôtres.*

> Usant à l'envi leurs chaleurs dernières,
> Nos deux cœurs seront deux vastes flambeaux,
> Qui réfléchiront leurs doubles lumières
> Dans nos deux esprits, ses miroirs jumeaux.

For those who like *ron, ron*, this verse is admirable, despite the many tags. Let us put it into prose, a test that all good verse can bear :

> Whilst prolonging their last heats,
> Our two hearts shall be two mighty torches.

But if the hearts are giving their last heats without stint, they can hardly be at the same time two vast torches ; smouldering torches, perhaps, but not flaming torches.

> Reflecting their double lights
> In the twin mirrors of our spirits.

It will be said that these lines do not lend themselves to translation, but translation enables us to see how absurd they are :

> Un soir fait de rose et de bleu mystique,
> Nous échangerons (here we get into the *ron, ron*, again),
> un éclair unique,
> Comme un long sanglot, tout chargé d'adieux ;

I exaggerated when I said that I could find a fault in every line ; I fail to find one in the line : *Un soir fait de rose et de*

bleu mystique. But I cannot pass the second line. Exchange a unique glance ! In an evening of rose and blue we shall exchange a unique glance ! But if the glance is unique it cannot be exchanged, and it is difficult to understand how a unique glance that has been exchanged can resemble a sob filled with farewells. The sonnet has been much admired despite its faults, as much as Verlaine's sonnet to Parsifal, in which every line is perfect. Such promiscuous admiration puzzles and annoys me, and I explain it through my knowledge of the human animal, who now and then loses his head and admires a beautiful thing without withdrawing his allegiance from ugliness.

CHAP. XV

In the beginning of the present year, 1922, thoughts of returning to criticism began to stir in me, and when Millais's picture of the three Miss Armstrongs was brought over from Dublin and exhibited in the Royal Academy, the occasion seemed to have come for me to express the admiration that had long been gathering in me for the pre-Raphaelite Millais, for the picture is pre-Raphaelite, though not what furniture dealers would call a period piece ; and during the winter I often sat asking myself to which newspaper I should address myself. Mr. Gosse had spoken to me about writing short stories of a column and a half or two columns in length for *The Sunday Times*, but the stories turned in my mind into articles, and I wrote to the Editor, who accepted my proposal in principle but wished to discuss details with me. So a tryst was made, and we talked of the length and the price and the number of articles to be contributed by me during the course of a month ; two a month seemed to me enough. My assurances were lavish that my articles would not interfere with his art critic's contributions, and all would have gone well

if I had kept to the subject that I had invited him to come to discuss. But my interest in ideas began to outrun my reason and unable to keep back the words I started to speak of an article which I thought would capture the imagination of the many. The Editor was all ears, and the article was published on Christmas Day ; but the date of publication did not help it, and distressed by the little interest my discovery had awakened, my thoughts turned to Dujardin, who had gone to the south of France to write a long-meditated work, no doubt the work in which Jesus is shown to be an old Palestinian deity worshipped in secret, in caves, whence he began to emerge on the decline of Judaism, Judaism having about that time lost all spiritual significance. Dujardin, I said, will be able to tell me why my article failed on his return from the south, where I could see him in my thoughts writing feverishly, the windows wide open, the curtains filled with sweet, Mediterranean breezes, working all day long, ten, twelve, fourteen hours a day, condensing a whole year's work into two months.

Dujardin has appeared in many of my books, but no sufficient account of him has been given, and as one is needed here I will let my readers into the story of a friendship that began in the days of the *Revue Wagnérienne*, how on meeting him one May morning wearing on his almost beardless face all the innocency of the early Italian Renaissance, I said to him : I heard last night at Blanche's *que vous avez abandonné la composition*. His reply goes further back than Botticelli, to the fourteenth century : *Parce que je sentais que c'est impossible de dégoter Wagner*. Now, whosoever writes much, repeats, and if I am guilty I apologise to all and sundry and hasten to add a new thing not hitherto told : that during the thirty-odd years of intimacy, the sequence of the aforesaid meeting, I have learnt his mind from end to end, and my knowledge being like God's knowledge—as complete and as perfect—it has always seemed to me a disgrace that I never took him as a subject for literature, for as such he is beyond compare, an abridgement of Shakespeare, a compendium of Balzac, more

Balzac than Shakespeare ; an undeveloped initiative of all the richness of the *Comedy*. I see him in nearly all the stories, the scenes of provincial life excepted, and if I have refrained it was from lack of talent to find an embracing line which would include all without loss or surplus. God knows, my thoughts have sought the fable day after day as we walk through the melancholy alleys of Fontainebleau or smoke cigars in the evening when his lady has gone to bed and he breaks forth like a bird into song. It is then, whilst listening to his tale of old Palestinian deities, that I think of him as a rocky hill and myself as a sculptor who sees in the hill multitudinous art that he will never attain, his means being insufficient. Balzac pondered many subjects which were never written ; we are fellow-sufferers. He started one morning in a tilbury to receive a meticulous account of a battle from a general, and a carriage accident deprived him of the needed information ; did I say accident ? a word without meaning, for accidents cannot be, since all is related, our thoughts and acts being links in a chain, each link begetting a new link, and so on and so on. We examine the chain that we have forged, anxious to remove a link that displeases us, but we find none that may be picked out, so closely is the chain woven. From whom, in what café, did I pick up so much doctrine ? What about the poor chap in the café ? Augustus used to say after listening attentively to me, for his joke was to assume that I was entirely café-educated. What would Augustus think of Dujardin and Dujardin think of Augustus ? As I shall never know these things—Augustus being among the gone, I return to Dujardin, begging the reader to accept a brief sketch in place of the two hundred thousand words which I owe to him and to Dujardin.

In the days of our early acquaintanceship he had, as has been related, abandoned music for poetry. Since then he has been poet, editor, novelist, punter, financial agent and journalist. He has contrived to combine the discrepant activities of dramatic author with biblical criticism, and all

these odds and oddments are links in the chain which is Dujardin. One more apology before I begin. The whole of his story, dear reader, cannot be told in an article, but it may help you to learn that when his musical aspirations ended in platitudes and sterile eccentricities, he turned to the editing of reviews, the *Revue Wagnérienne* first of all, and afterwards the *Revue Indépendante*; and at the fall of these reviews he purchased for a small sum a newspaper called *Fin de Siècle*, to which he added another newspaper, *Jean qui Rit*. And out of these he made large sums of money, which he spent in founding other newspapers that did not pay their way, and in building the house which I have often described and which I shall describe again because it pleases me to do so: a long, white house of two storeys, with every window overlooking the vale; for the village of Changis is not a pleasant spectacle and Dujardin's house turns a plain wall to it, an architectural defect, according to the servants, who find themselves cut off from the stirs and quarrels of the streets and the yards. The house rises long and straight above a stone terrace lined with vases; the rooms on the first floor all open one into the other, and the central hall gives the impression of a round hall, so cunningly have the perspectives been managed by Anguetin, who contributed a great fresco and a ceiling on which three bronze-coloured maidens whirl in a mad dance round the stem of the chandelier; the bedrooms are on the second floor. Are there garrets for the servants? I know little of the house above the ground floor and the added wing of three rooms which is given over to me during the month of May. *Une vraie maison d'été* is Le Val Changis, for if there be a ray of light in the sky it seeks the windows, and the windows, too, are so enamoured of the sun that I believe they would open of themselves, if we forgot. A blackbird whistles across the forest-encircled swards, and we are possessed of a little elation when the goat bleats amid the tall grass for somebody to bring her branches, for goats love spring branches, as was noticed long ago in Sicily. Even the stone nymph ensconced

under the great trees advances her thigh more sweetly in the spring morning ; and when the philosopher is not watering his flowers or pruning, he walks through the winding alleys meditating the mysteries of Palestinian folk-lore.

A paradise indeed is the Val Changis, but into every paradise a serpent comes sooner or later, and the serpent that came to the Val Changis is a saw-mill. Dujardin was in doubt whether he should buy the adjoining house with its garden, but he did not foresee the wall and the saw-mill, I suppose one of the results of the war. The slight hiss of the mill is almost drowned by the songs of the birds, but those who hire the house for the summer months complain and try to get it cheaper because of the saw, and Dujardin last year welcomed a visitor who called to inspect the house on a Sunday. The visitor said : I have heard of noise in the Val Changis, to which Dujardin answered : Yes, there are always complaints, and of course there is noise ; if you listen you will hear. But I hear nothing but the murmur of the forest, the visitor replied. I like forest murmurs, and fail to understand that anybody could expect a silent forest. And *The Ring* never being very far from Dujardin's thoughts, he began to hum the music, interrupting it with the bird's song, telling that all the motives proceeded from one motive ; and to bear out this theory he did not hesitate to find that fundamentally the bird and the Ride were the same.

It is to this sylvan retreat that Dujardin retires to rest from his many activities, commercial and literary. The Val Changis is stored with books of all sorts and kinds, and on opening presses one finds shelves filled with manuscripts. I wonder if among these manuscripts will be discovered some of the betting books in which Dujardin noted the odds he laid or took in the years when he drove a tilbury to Longchamps every Sunday morning confident that his system was the only one that could oppose successfully the science of the bookmaker. A strange system it was, one never practised, I believe, by anybody but Dujardin, strange and yet reasonable

if one considers it ; for the backer of horses is turned hither and thither by what he reads in the newspapers, by owners, by the advice of tipsters, by the weights, by the show of a certain horse in the preliminary : one and all allies of the bookmaker ; but relieved from all knowledge of the horses, in other words, relieved from all prejudices, the backer rises triumphant and ruins his foe, the Ring. Go to the race-course ignorant, said Dujardin, and never bet unless at the very last moment a horse advances suddenly from shall we say ten to one to five to one ; if this happens, put all the money you can on the horse, for if a horse comes from ten to one to five to one in the last half-hour, we may reasonably suppose that the stable is backing him ; a system, without doubt, which whilst followed won for Dujardin large sums of money and made him feared at Longchamps. But the soul is perfidious and life beset with accidents, and one day returning from Longchamps the horse that Dujardin was driving took fright and descended the Champs Elysées at a gallop, Dujardin unable to stop it but just able to keep to his side of the road, crying to the vehicles in front of him to make way, which they did. At the Rondpoint it seemed that the horse would weary and stop before he reached la Place de la Concorde ; but as he entered the last reach of the avenue a carriage driven by a sleepy or deaf coachman failed to take heed of the advancing danger till it was too late. Crash went the tilbury into the carriage ; two old ladies were carried out fainting ; the sergent de ville arrived ; an action for damages was begun, and Dujardin, whose taste for litigation did not allow him to compromise, was mulcted—a mulct of ten thousand francs was the adjudication of the court, a sum so out of all proportion to the damage he had done, that discouraged by this experience in jurisprudence, and perhaps weary of the slow accumulation of Sundays needed to acquire a fortune at Longchamps, he deserted the Parisian race-courses for Monte Carlo, and it was not long before the croupiers raked in all the money he had won at Longchamps and Auteuil ; whereupon

Dujardin ceased to be a punter and became a journalist, and a successful journalist, as the house in the Val Changis testifies.

It will never be clear to me whether it was Kant or Nietzsche or Palestinian folk-lore that interrupted the successful administration of *Fin de Siècle* and *Jean qui Rit*, or whether the attractions that these newspapers once presented had become stale. All things have their season, newspapers, religions, and ourselves, and Dujardin having outlived his music, his journalism, his betting, his poetry and play-writing, could not do else than turn into biblical criticism. The body and soul cannot be altogether dissociated, but it would be a shrewd psychologist who would divine from the mental eccentricities here specified the tall, handsome, well-made man of six feet that is Dujardin, an Englishman in appearance rather than a Frenchman, long-limbed, small-headed, broad-shouldered, whose temper alternates between fierceness and affection, affection easily tilting the balance. When we look at his head we notice that it is not round and high as we thought it was, but retreats with evasions, and our thoughts say : The forehead, mayhap, of a man without continuity of purpose ; and turning to the eyes for further tidings, we say : The eyes of a dreamer rather than those of an artist, and we remember that Dujardin has never been able to find a sufficiency of form for his dreams, whether they were poetic, philosophic, or religious. His first impulse was towards religion ; he had once wished to be a priest, but exaltations were depreciated in the seminary, and Dujardin without his exaltations would not present to us his face of a high ecclesiastic, or maybe an actor of genius. It is not, however, from the high nose that we learn the true man ; the mouth is more telltale. Dujardin's is large and loose ; a coarse tongue licks at the lips, and when we catch sight of his tongue, we think of a man so greedy for life that he would lap it all up, almost an animal, without power to stay his desires ; a splendid temperament for an artist if it be not in conflict with another. And this conflict I thought I discovered in one of his plays, *Les*

Époux D'Heur-Le-Port: The pensive, reasoning soul of Henrik Ibsen is not natural in him; not the whole but only half the man is speaking.

I am afraid that my portraits of my life-long friends will not be welcomed by anybody except my friends; they will be deemed by the many who look upon art as a means whereby artists may fill their pockets and cut a figure in the world, as supercilious and cruel. My answer to all such is that I write only for the few, for my friends, and to this explanation I will add that I regret my talent does not allow me to go further in the direction I would go; for I would emulate the veracity of Holbein, who followed an outline with such singleness of purpose that the souls of his sitters are afloat on his canvases. And I would emulate, too, the sincerity with which Dujardin has worshipped music and literature, always, without ever asking from either anything but the joy of art; for art has always been with him a rite, accomplished in secret, without thought of money or even glory. A man of large appetites and fine sensibilities. Shall I ever forget the writing of the trilogy, his first love story serving him as a motive whereon he built three dramas, composed in irregular verse, saying to me when the last had been performed: If I were to send her all this literature, would she leave the parson she had married and take me back? In the days that I am remembering Dujardin was a perfervid youth, whose joy was to preach and instruct, and at any hour of the day or night he was available. If a disciple in search of knowledge were to come to him at three o'clock in the morning and stand by his bedside and say: Dujardin, I am in doubt why Brünnhilde, who is but an emanation of Wotan's will, should be condemned by Wotan to sleep till a pure hero comes through the fire and releases her from it, Dujardin would rise from his bed, rub his eyes, and recalling the philosophy of Wagner by his motives, which I believe he never ceases to chant even in his dreams, would begin by telling his visitor that the point had often been under discussion in the *Revue Wagnérienne*. He would not, however,

tell the intruder to read the back numbers but show much patience with him, inviting him to sit on the edge of the bed whilst he explained the metaphysics of the music ; and seeing the twain in my thoughts and hearing them with the ear of memory, I begin a little fable with a smile on my lips and a kindly feeling in my heart. In my fable Dujardin is a child asleep in his cradle under a window, and down the pour of moonlight comes a fairy, a good one, and standing by the cradle she says : Thou shalt love art more purely than any man ever born ; and she predicts a talent which will enable the child when he comes to manhood to *dégoter Wagner*. But her words are overheard by a wicked fairy who has hidden herself in the chimney, and when the good fairy departs the wicked fairy stands by the cradle, saying : I cannot rob thee of the gift that has been bestowed upon thee, but I will bestow another that shall destroy it : an exceeding love of living. And so Dujardin remains what the fairies have made him, equally subject to two influences, hanging between hell and heaven, returning to art at intervals sorrow-laden, like a sinner to Christ. And who will fail to understand Dujardin when I tell that one day as we came down the little dusty road leading from the tramline to the vale, he said, in answer to my wise counsels for a greater strictness in the management of his life : You would wring all taste, all flavour out of my life ! How significant this is of character, and a few days later other words as significant were spoken : I am weary of an endless struggle, and stagger at times under burdens grown heavier than they were. And to know him to the quick, I answered : I have always tried to avoid burdens, and his reply was : And I have gone through life collecting them. In these few lines lies the story of our lives, and stated thus briefly the reader will be disposed to thinking that Dujardin, who followed his instincts without thought for the consequences, is nearer to the heart of his kind than the man who sheds all responsibilities but one. Even though a man, says the world, put aside the woman he has taken to his

bosom for another, he is more human and gets forgiveness easier than he who refrains marriage. But were all men alike the world would be wearisome to us all. And my thought then taking a sudden turn, I remembered that Beaumarchais, a smuggler and much else, wrote *Figaro* in a post-chaise whilst travelling from Paris to Marseilles, and that Socrates lives in his reported words with an intensity beyond that of any manuscript or holograph : Jesus, too. Mahomet did not write : he dictated, it appears, and the value we bestow on reading and writing is part and parcel of the silliness of the modern world. Over the page I wrote : returning sorrow-laden like a sinner to Christ, as if in the belief that Apollo would wear a hard face at the return of the prodigal, and to-day a pamphlet, a chronicle of Dujardin's triumph comes from Paris, telling that *Le Dieu Mort et Ressuscité* was received with applause. Nor does this exhaust my tidings. *Les Lauriers sont coupés*, a beautiful little work that I loved when it first appeared and that sent me searching for somebody to admire it with me, has at last found admirers, who will no doubt sooner or later discover another work entitled *Les Hantises*. It is with misgivings that I join in the chorus, for I had begun to look upon Dujardin as a sower who scattered thoughts for others to harvest, thereby putting him above the endless scribblers among whom we live. I was beginning to think of him as one of the great teachers, one of those who teach by the spoken word more than by the written : But there is no real cause for alarm ; the fact that Dujardin has found himself at last will not disprove the truth of the old saw : Whosoever finds himself shall lose himself. He will not write many books, and if a man writes but little he is more likely to be remembered than if he writes a great deal ; only Balzac has survived many books. Mallarmé said that there were not more than three or four books in any man—words of wisdom useful to me inasmuch as I have liked listening better than reading, and to none have I given so ardent an ear as I have to Edouard Dujardin. Manet,

Degas, and Monet were casual contributors, but were I asked to tell in whose field I have harvested most profitably, I should answer : In Dujardin's. Every May brings me to the terrace overlooking the shelving sward, and the hour of hours is when evening droops upon the garden and St. Paul rises from the shadows as the protagonist of an old Palestinian religion, a theory which I have never been able to accept, thereby vexing Dujardin, causing him sometimes to raise his voice to unseemly height, and the rather when I introduce my belief that some of Paul's manuscripts have been included in the medley known as the Acts.

My difficulty will be, said I to myself (my body in 121, Ebury Street, my soul in the Val Changis), to persuade him to consider the Acts impartially, for having a theory of his own in mind he will look upon everything that conflicts with it as an act of ill humour on my part, as he did once when I told that I had described Genesareth as a harp-shapen lake, and admired my own perspicacity when a pundit informed me that Genesareth contained the roots of the Hebrew word for harp. An altogether false derivation ! cried Dujardin, who had accepted the one that suited his theory, and he protested, stormed, walked about the room with his fist in the air, and an hour afterwards came up to my bedroom and apologised. But of course I was not angry ; why should I be about the derivation of a word in a language of which I knew nothing, and he only a few words ? But if his knowledge of Hebrew is visionary, his knowledge of the Bible is thorough, and mayhap if I can persuade him to consider the Acts with me I shall be able to weave a thoughtful article out of the stuff that I published in *The Sunday Times*, without, however, withdrawing anything that I have said about the farewell to the elders of Ephesus. After all, only one thing concerns me—that a piece of Paul's writing drifted into the Acts.

It is unfortunate that I cannot think except upon paper ; the first draft is therefore merely preparation. *The Sunday Times* article was not ripe in me ; I was at the talking stage of

it; and in me there are always three stages: the talking stage, the scenario stage, and the text stage. The Acts cannot be discussed in less than six columns, and not having six columns at my disposal I should have stinted myself to relating in the first paragraph that the document known as the Acts is a document founded upon other documents, a late redaction of many different fragments, containing one so akin to Paul in language and style, and of all, in feeling, that whosoever reads it in this knowledge should for ever afterwards be haunted by the belief that a manuscript from Paul's hand has found its way into the compilation. And impelled by a desire to test my personal appreciation of this passage, I turned to the passage itself:

. . . . Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jersualem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you over-

seers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

Paul, and nothing but Paul, I said, and fell to thinking that the lines were more beautiful, more expressive, more true to humanity and to one man than I had imagined them to be. The great writers, I continued, have done other things, but they have not done this one thing : no one has but Paul, and Paul himself rarely invites us into his very soul as he does in this farewell. All the years he has lived and the self they have led him into are here. We look into his eyes ; his breath is upon our faces ; his words invite us into the very movements of his thought, of his instincts ; yet the scholars have attributed this passage to something Luke heard and remembered ! a criticism so crude that perforce it sets me thinking that scholars are but children in aesthetics, apt in their search after grammatical constructions, to overlook the

soul beneath, haggling experts, only aware of soulless externals. A cabinet-maker can tell at a glance if a joint be by a skilled workman's hand or by an apprentice, and writers of first-rate narrative as easily that the farewell is the outpouring of a man's stricken heart, a sobbing that cannot be fabricated from a document. I know of a dear pedant to whom the document is everything and Nature nothing, who could walk through miles of country lanes without noticing a flower or a bird, and enjoy both if he met them in a page of print. I know one, and everybody knows another, but a natural sense of things is rare in man, rarer in the instructed man than in the peasant, and that is why learned men are usually unable to distinguish between literature that comes out of personal feeling and literature that has its source in thought, in reflection, in documents.

How much better it would have been if I had sent my thoughts to *The Sunday Times* instead of that stiff composition so unlike myself, for I cannot write, I can only think. . . . But there was another reason—yes, indeed, there was another reason, and the most important reason of all, for believing that the farewell came from Paul's own hand, for it is the most striking example in literature of what I described in *The Sunday Times* as personal passion. The words personal passion do not carry the uttermost of my meaning. I would have done better to have said: personal heat. Better still, perhaps, if the word personal had been left out; heat would have been enough. Nor is the wise Dean to be blamed for not having understood, for even Mary Robinson, poet though she be to the ends of her taper fingers, in reply quoted some verses of Catullus to refute my contention that Paul was the first writer who possessed that rarest of all gifts, not the greatest but the rarest, personal passion. I am falling again into the old mistake, saying personal passion when I should have said heat, for the word passion puts thoughts of eloquence, rhetoric, vehemence, into the reader's mind, and the quality whereby we know Paul is not eloquence, nor

rhetoric, nor vehemence, but heat. But shall I ever be able to make plain to the reader what I mean by literary heat? A definition is impossible, but examples may help him to understand, and Paul's Epistles are beset with examples of heat, sometimes furnace fierce, sometimes mild as a turf fire. My thoughts run to a passage in Romans:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now, having been prompted, all men should understand that the farewell did not come out of the mind, the conscious mind, but out of the heart; and that is what I mean by heat, that which comes straight out of the heart unchilled by thought. I would say dimmed, but reason does not dim; chilled is the right word, for all that comes from reason strikes cold; nor shall we look long for passages of a gentler heat, showing Paul in that kindly nature which won for him the love of all men. The Epistle to the Philippians need not be searched, for on almost every page we shall come upon verses that recall the kindly temper, the affectionate warmth that breathes through the farewell spoken at Miletus to the elders of Ephesus. Why did I not write in *The Sunday Times* my own simple appreciations of Paul, refraining from pseudo learning and trite admonitions that modern and ancient literature might be searched in vain for heat? I understand it all now. I wrote about heat in icy phrases; argument is always ice, and scholarship, reason, thought, reflection, and deduction. For ever and a day scholars will be the last to

understand that the farewell is Paul and nothing but Paul, for scholarship does not dream but loses itself in grammar, in Paul's Greek, never realising fully, if at all, that the grammar book is of no consequence, as is sufficiently proved by Theocritus and Burns.

It will be well, I continued in my thoughts, to apply myself to the tracing of the quality brought into literature by Saint Paul. Héloïse's letters are full of it, and eight centuries after we meet it again in Saint Teresa's biography, where it is even more remarkable than it is in Héloïse's too few letters. Fauriel, in his *History of Provençal Poetry*, attributes a Dawn Song with : *Ah God ! Ah God ! that day should be so soon !* for burden, to a woman, an acute remark, for a woman's passion outlasts any love night, however long. Such was Sappho and such was the unknown Spaniard of the Dawn Song that Swinburne amplified, losing some of its original heat and naturalness. Shelley's *Indian Serenade* is truer, but again the emotion is intellectualised. Only a woman may tell a love story, for women pay a heavier price for their love affairs than men do, and that is why Nature rewards them with longer delights than ours. Once a woman, speaking to me of love's delight, said : It begins with a thrill like that of a hot bath, delicious ; but we desire a deeper intensity, and there comes a feeling of melting as if all the knots were loosening, and this is followed by a tearing till soul and body are about to part. We know not whether it be pain or pleasure. . . . A moment comes of madness, so acute that we feel we cannot live through it. We do, somehow. Afterwards, the blood weighs heavy, as if it were lead, and then comes long voluptuousness ; the brain is overwhelmed in it : a throbbing ecstasy, a pulsing beat.

CHAP. XVI

Moore. My dear De La Mare, Wordsworth and grouse cannot be discussed together ; each demands our exclusive attention,

and the birds to which I am helping you arrived from Scotland last Monday and reached their highest flavour this evening. And the friend who sent them includes in his presents of game presents of vegetables ; he likes his asparagus to overlap his peas and his peas to overlap his beans, and so my dinners are often seasonable.

De La Mare. Your long residence in France has raised up in you an inveterate hatred of vegetables boiled in water ; and you watched us help ourselves to bread sauce with contempt.

Moore. Bread sauce has always seemed to me more suitable to little birds just taken out of the nest than to men and women ; but it may be, as De La Mare says, that I caught the prejudice in France. Boiled chicken has never appeared on this table.

Freeman. I was surprised to see turbot.

Moore. A flabby, tasteless fish, which for thirty years I ate in full belief of its supremacy like any other Englishman.

De La Mare. And when and how was the discovery made that turbot is a flabby, tasteless fish ? Was it your palate that turned against it suddenly, or did some words heard accidentally awaken a latent dislike ?

Moore. Our taste in art purifies with age, and it may be that there is an advancement in our palates which the fishmonger does not take into account, for it is almost impossible in London to get any fish except soles, whiting, cod, haddock, salmon, salmon trout. We may get an occasional brill or plaice, but shad, the finest of all fish, has not been eaten in London for the last fifty years. Shad used to come to London from Holland, but whosoever would eat shad now must go to France in May. Shad comes up the Loire in May, bringing an unimaginable delight to men. Shad and bass are not unlike, but bass comes after shad, a long way before salmon, yet we have to go to France to get this fish And our grey mullet is sent to France, why I have never been able to find out. The fishmongers tell me that Londoners are too stupid to eat it, but my belief is that the fishmongers have, for reasons which I

cannot penetrate, decided that we shall live without bass or mullet. The fault may be with Billingsgate, and the boycott of bass may in the end oblige me to organise a Bass Club. If I could get a hundred members, Billingsgate would have to submit. We will have coffee in the drawing-room, Mabel. And you, Freeman, will you have some more wine? And you, De La Mare? No? Then we may as well go upstairs. You do not smoke cigars, De La Mare? Freeman, I know, doesn't. I was sorry I could not offer you a cigarette the last time you were here, but this evening you will find some in a little sandal-wood box, a tea-caddy of old time, for I dislike the usual silver box—well, as I dislike turbot; the two go together. And I have returned to cigars after a long absence with some misgivings, for not every cigar in the box is worth smoking, no matter what price you may pay a hundred. I doubt if the pleasure one gets from a good cigar is a sufficient recompense for the disappointment of a bad one. You will both dine with me on the occasion of the lecture on Shelley and Spenser?

De La Mare. I don't know that I shall give the lecture again in London.

Moore. Then I must read it, for I don't think I can be beguiled out of London even by Shelley and Spenser. What a happy association of names! Together the twin Muses arise before me: Erato and Melpomene.

Freeman. A lecture is written to be heard, not read. It will certainly be given again and you must hear it, and should De La Mare fail to inform you of the date, I will.

Moore. Pray do so, for though I am but a prose writer today I read poetry ardently, almost passionately in my youth.

Freeman. You said at dinner that you read poetry till you were thirty.

Moore. And after thirty I hardly looked into a poetry book.

De La Mare. Poetry book! You would shock us, but we will not be shocked. How the words——

Moore. Here is Mabel, come with our coffee.

De La Mare. How the words *poetry book* evoke the trim Victorian parlour with all its paraphernalia: rep sofa, wax fruits, and the murmur of the quiet Sunday afternoon coming in through the open window.

Freeman. We know that some men come into the world without the poetic sense——

Moore. I am not sure that you are right, Freeman; indeed, I am sure that you are quite wrong, and that if a search were made among the private papers of lawyers, doctors, and even colonels in the army, we should find a great number of verses, hundreds and thousands, all written before the writers passed from the twenties into the thirties.

Freeman. But the verses you would find would be doggerel.

Moore. Very likely they would be; but opinions vary about verses and I am making for facts: that everybody, or nearly everybody, writes verses between twenty and thirty.

De La Mare. Love verses.

Moore. The larger part of every poetry book consists of verses about love, not of the best poetry but of the best popular poetry, and no doubt a large proportion of the verses we should find if we were to search among the private papers of lawyers, doctors, colonels, policemen and Cabinet Ministers, would be no more than love calls. Even so, you would be puzzled to answer why this love poetry should cease at thirty, for the love call doesn't cease then, not till long afterwards.

Freeman. Are you sure that doctors and lawyers do not continue to write poetry after thirty?

Moore. Most men read and write poetry between fifteen and thirty and afterwards very seldom, for in youth we are attracted by ideas, and modern poetry being concerned almost exclusively with ideas we live on duty, liberty and fraternity as chameleons are said to live on light and air, till at last we turn from ideas to things, thinking that we have lost our taste for poetry, unless, perchance, we are classical scholars.

De La Mare. I am beginning to understand. You would set a new poetic standard.

Moore. You give a lofty interpretation to a humble enterprise. If you will bear with me I'll continue a little longer. I submit that it is rare to approach life except through interpretive codes: glosses learnt by heart before any attempt is made to read the text, theories of life so thoroughly assimilated that even the exceptional intelligence after a brief survey is glad to take refuge in authority and tradition. The Dean of St. Paul's is an exemplar of the power of education and circumstance to mute the intelligence, if not to mute the intelligence, to mute at least the expression of the intelligence and to make it the humble servant of conventions and prejudices. He knows quite well, for instance, that incest as a sin is an invention of the modern world. The Pharaohs nearly always married their sisters; in ancient Persia a son married his mother, and the fruit of the union was considered sacred. The Dean, as I say, knows quite well that horror of incest is one of our modern conventions, but if he were asked he would give it as his opinion that Lord Byron was guilty of a very great sin when he lay with his half-sister; yet we admit marriage between first cousins. Cousins on the father's as well as on the mother's side may marry, and these are more nearly related than a sister is to her half-brother. The Dean of St. Paul's knows, too, that sodomy is essentially a Christian sin. He knows that the Greeks, to whom we owe our civilisation and to whom we are inferior in all the arts, married to continue the race but did not love their wives except in rare instances, yet modern conventions might compel him to advocate or at least to acquiesce in the persecution of those afflicted with abnormal love.

Freeman. The moral code has been continually sifted for the last two thousand years.

Moore. Since the birth of the Christ idea.

Freeman. If you like to put it so; and it is not easy to

believe that after all these moral siftings we are no nearer the truth than the Greeks were.

MOORE. Our ideas of beauty have coarsened in the years you speak of.

FREEMAN. But in morals we have a clearer vision.

MOORE. I see now that I was wrong to introduce morals into my argument or discourse. You would have understood me better if I had refrained, and I will return without more ado to aesthetics and ask if I am not right when I say that no literary critic, however gifted, would have been able to convince the public of sixty years ago that Shelley wasted half of his life writing about liberty. None was born with a finer intelligence than Shelley, and yet the simple inference that to have liberty we must renounce liberty, was not grasped by him ; it seemed to lie outside his consciousness. The other day I began to read *Hellas*, but could not continue reading, despite the beauty of the verses, so vague was his apprehension of what he was writing about : liberty. Wordsworth advocated duty as strenuously as Shelley had advocated liberty, and he would have been as unable to put a meaning on the word duty as Shelley would have been to put a meaning on the word liberty. None would deny that Mill's was a first-rate intelligence, yet he was duped like everybody else ; he delighted in duty. And the explanation of the discarding of the idea of liberty for the idea of duty becomes plain when we remember that the examination of the Bible, begun in the sixteenth century, began to yield its fruit in eighteen-sixty or seventy. Some will call it Dead Sea fruit, some will call it the immortal fruit of the years, but we are poets and unconcerned with public morality. The fact is enough that in the 'sixties belief in God was replaced by belief in morality, and very delighted were the converts to the new creed at their escape from heaven and hell ; all the same, they felt cold and strove to keep themselves warm by reading and writing odes to duty. Now, to conclude my little exordium, to which you have listened with great patience, I would like to read a few lines from *The*

Excursion, lines that were much admired when I was a boy :

> Possessions vanish, and opinions change,
> And passions hold a fluctuating seat :
> But, by the storms of circumstance unshaken,
> And subject neither to eclipse nor wane,
> Duty exists ;—immutably survive,
> For our support, the measures and the forms,
> Which an abstract intelligence supplies,
> Whose kingdom is where time and space are not :
> Of other converse, which mind, soul, and heart,
> Do, with united urgency, require,
> What more, that may not perish ? Thou dread Source,
> Prime, self-existing Cause and End of all,
> That in the scale of being fill their place,
> Above our human region, or below,
> Set and sustained ;

It may be doubted if anybody to-day would claim these lines as poetry—but there again I am bringing into my argument or discourse extraneous matter which had much better be left out, for what I wish to draw your attention to is that an idea which was so near to Wordsworth is so remote from us that we hardly understood what Gilbert meant when he introduced the Slave of Duty into *The Pirates of Penzance*. Morality has gone the way of duty ; we call it Victorianism, and when Tennyson's *Idyls* are mentioned everybody smiles. No doubt the ideas of liberty, duty, and morality will return, but the poetry they once inspired will not. Why are you smiling, Freeman ? You think that when maidens become chaste we shall again consider Tennyson a great poet ?

Freeman. My thoughts had wandered to Carlyle's description of Coleridge snuffling : Subjectivity ! Objectivity ! as he came across a lawn. A wonderful essay this is, but the cruelty of it is near to savagery. We may speak plainly of each other, but it is doubtful if any man has the right to spit upon another and befoul him.

Moore. As only a eunuch can befoul another. How dare this impotent Scot speak contemptuously of the author of Christabel!

> The night is chill; the forest bare;
> Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
> There is not wind enough in the air
> To move away the ringlet curl
> From the lovely lady's cheek—
> There is not wind enough to twirl
> The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
> That dances as often as dance it can,
> Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
> On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Time cannot wither nor custom stale a dream-flower like this one creating out of itself, the mind gave birth belike to immortality.

Freeman. The lines are magical lines, wonderful as cloud or flower, and they must have come to the poet in a dream, a waking dream, maybe.

Moore. No lines of such aerial beauty, rainbow beauty, stellar beauty, are in Wordsworth.

De La Mare. Coleridge outlived Wordsworth's influence, but there was a time when the poems of Wordsworth and Coleridge were indistinguishable. But Wordsworth is not altogether without objective poetry.

Moore. There are passages here and there, but no whole poems.

Freeman. Do you know *The Green Linnet*?

Moore. I cannot recall it.

Freeman. Then you have not read it; for whosoever has read it, if he have the poetic sense, remembers *The Green Linnet* to the end of his life.

Moore. I beg of you to repeat it.

Freeman. I would not trust my memory. Would you trust yours, De La Mare?

DE LA MARE :

Beneath these fruit-tree boughs that shed
Their snow-white blossoms on my head,
With brightest sunshine round me spread
  Of spring's unclouded weather,
In this sequestered nook how sweet
To sit upon my orchard seat !
And birds and flowers once more to greet,
  My last year's friends together.

One have I marked, the happiest guest
In all this covert of the blest :
Hail to Thee, far above the rest
  In joy of voice and pinion !
Thou, Linnet ! in thy green array,
Presiding Spirit here to-day,
Dost lead the revels of the May ;
  And this is thy dominion.

While birds, and butterflies, and flowers
Make all one band of paramours,
Thou, ranging up and down the bowers
  Art sole in thy employment ;
A Life, a Presence like the Air,
Scattering thy gladness without care,
Too blest with any one to pair ;
  Thyself thy own enjoyment.

Amid yon tuft of hazel trees,
That twinkle to the gusty breeze,
Behold him perched in ecstasies,
  Yet seeming still to hover ;
There ! where the flutter of his wings
Upon his back and body flings
Shadows and sunny glimmerings,
  That cover him all over.

My dazzled sight he oft deceives,
A Brother of the dancing leaves ;
Then flits, and from the cottage eaves
  Pours forth his song in gushes ;
As if by that exulting strain
He mocked and treated with disdain
The voiceless Form he chose to feign,
  While fluttering in the bushes.

MOORE. Having found so much pleasure in the bird's plumage and song I think he might have omitted :

The voiceless Form he chose to feign.

FREEMAN. If you can endure no poetry except a description of the external world, your reading will be confined practically to Shakespeare's songs.

MOORE. I shall be glad to re-read these songs, almost forgotten by me. Meanwhile, do you quote one.

FREEMAN. Which do you think, De La Mare ?

DE LA MARE. If you have in mind the song in praise of the owl and the cuckoo : *While greasy Joan doth keel the pot*, recite it.

FREEMAN. The song which the curate, the schoolmaster, the clown, and others sing at the end of *Love's Labour's Lost*.

SPRING

I

When daisies pied and violets blue
  And lady-smocks all silver-white
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue
  Do paint the meadows with delight,
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
  Mocks married men ; for thus sings he,
                Cuckoo ;
Cuckoo, cuckoo ; O word of fear,
  Unpleasing to a married ear !

II

When shepherds pipe on oaten straws,
And merry larks are ploughmen's clocks,
When turtles tread, and rooks, and daws,
And maidens bleach their summer smocks,
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men ; for thus sings he,
Cuckoo ;
Cuckoo, cuckoo ; O word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear !

WINTER

III

When icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When blood is nipp'd, and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
Tu-whit ;
Tu-who, a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

IV

When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw,
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
Tu-whit ;
Tu-who, a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

Moore. My dear friends, I have a proposal to lay before you. If you approve of my definition of pure poetry, something that the poet creates outside of his own personality, we three might compile a book that would be a real advancement in the study of poetry—an anthology of pure poetry, the only one that is lacking on the bookstalls.

Freeman. An entertaining idea at the first thought of it. What do you say, De La Mare ?

De La Mare. Many of the most beautiful poems in the language would have to be barred; for instance, Shelley's lines written in dejection on the sea-shore near Naples :

> The sun is warm, the sky is clear,
> The waves are dancing fast and bright,
> Blue isles and snowy mountains wear
> The purple noon's transparent light :
> The breath of the moist earth is light
> Around its unexpected buds ;
> Like many a voice of one delight,
> The winds, the birds, the ocean floods,
> The City's voice itself is soft, like Solitude's.

In the next two stanzas Shelley writes subjectively, but he begins in the third stanza to see himself as a tired child :

> Yet now despair itself is mild,
> Even as the winds and waters are ;
> I could lie down like a tired child,
> And weep away the life of care
> Which I have borne and yet must bear,
> Till death like sleep might steal on me,
> And I might feel in the warm air
> My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
> Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

MOORE. The value of the anthology, if we compile it, would be that it creates a new standard. Of course, we should have to explain in the introduction why we discarded one poem and kept another.

FREEMAN. And the reasons for omitting a certain poem will be almost as entertaining as the reasons for the retention of another.

DE LA MARE. We shall find as many as a hundred and fifty if we search the Elizabethans thoroughly. Fletcher wrote beautiful lyrics; he will yield many pages. There's Ben Jonson, and——

FREEMAN. Should we not look further back than the Elizabethans? Spenser—but I am afraid he will yield nothing of what we want. There is Skelton.

DE LA MARE. I like Skelton, a true poet, a darling poet; but we must not trust our memories. It is so long since I have read *The Nut-Brown Maid*—and you, Freeman, do you remember it enough to tell us that it contains no hint of subjectivity?

FREEMAN. If we are overstrict I doubt if we shall find a hundred pages of pure poetry.

DE LA MARE. We must draw a strict line, for our anthology rests upon it.

FREEMAN. Moore regrets that Wordsworth could not keep back the words: Voiceless Form.

DE LA MARE. Which may be interpreted that he could not admire the green linnet without intimating that there is a soul in Nature.

FREEMAN. Milton does not abound in objective poetry, Pope still less, but we shall find several poems that come within our definition in the *Songs of Innocence*, none, I am afraid, in the *Songs of Experience*. From Shelley we shall gather a handful: the *Hymn to Pan*, and *The Cloud*. Would you admit *The Cloud*, De La Mare?

DE LA MARE. *The Cloud* is not so good a poem as the *Hymn to Pan*, but it comes within our definition.

MOORE. There is *The Sensitive Plant*; a more beautiful description of a garden was never written.

DE LA MARE. But he includes an Indian maiden in the second part, and he ends the poem with a morality:

> It is a modest creed, and yet
> Pleasant if one considers it,
> To own that death itself must be
> Like all the rest, a mockery.

MOORE. I see your point, but why not the first part of *The Sensitive Plant*?

DE LA MARE. If you admit a right of search for objective stanzas our quest will never end. The most beautiful poetry in *The Ancient Mariner* is the objective poetry——

FREEMAN. And the inclusion of these passages will be a criticism of poetry.

DE LA MARE. Yes; but I think we had better limit the anthology to complete poems.

FREEMAN. I am afraid we shall find very little in Keats.

DE LA MARE. I doubt if we shall find anything. We cannot have the *Ode to a Grecian Urn*; it is barred by subjectivity, likewise the *Ode to the Nightingale*. *The Eve of St. Agnes* is a long narrative poem——

FREEMAN. If we are not to have a single quotation from Keats——

DE LA MARE. There is only one way of settling our differences, and that is to put the poems to the vote; any poem that doesn't receive two votes will be rejected.

MOORE. Keats never attracted me. I know he is the fashion, but I am more interested in my own than in other people's taste and I think of him too frequently as a pussy cat on a sunny lawn. In Poe——

DE LA MARE. We shall find many poems in Poe. There is, of course, the poem *To Helen*:

Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicéan barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, wayworn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece,
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo ! in yon brilliant window niche.
How statue-like I see thee stand,
The agate lamp within thy hand !
Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
Are Holy Land !

The last lines of *The Raven* exclude the poem from our anthology :

Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door !
Quoth the raven, Nevermore.

Our difficulty with Poe will be not to overburden our pages with him We shall have to consider *Dreamland* :

By a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only,
Where an Eidolon, named Night,
On a black throne reigns upright,
I have reached these lands but newly
From an ultimate dim Thule——
From a wild weird clime that lieth, sublime,
Out of Space—out of Time.

And there can be little doubt that we must include *The City in the Sea* :

> Lo ! Death has reared himself a throne
> In a strange city lying alone
> Far down within the dim West.

We are all agreed about *The City in the Sea* ? And *Eulalie* :

> I dwelt alone
> In a world of moan,
> And my soul was a stagnant tide,
> Till the fair and gentle Eulalie became my blushing
> bride——

FREEMAN. No ! No ! No !
MOORE. No ! No ! No !
DE LA MARE.

> Ah, less—less bright
> The stars of the night
> Than the eyes of the radiant girl !

ALL. No ! No ! No !
DE LA MARE. *Eulalie* has found no supporters. What about *The Haunted Palace* ?

> In the greenest of our valleys
> By good angels tenanted,
> Once a fair and stately palace—
> Radiant palace—reared its head.

MOORE. Yes.
DE LA MARE. And you, Freeman ?
FREEMAN. Yes.
DE LA MARE. *The Haunted Palace* goes in. Among the late poems *The Bells*——

FREEMAN. A trick! A trick!

DE LA MARE. The beautiful poem *To Helen*, the second one, contains some subjective lines which I think you will agree debars it. *Eldorado* is a beautiful poem, but we agreed to accept nothing but poems of the first rank. Then there is *Ulalume*:

> The skies they were ashen and sober;
> The leaves they were crispéd and sere——

MOORE. I am wholeheartedly for *Ulalume*.

FREEMAN. I am not wholeheartedly for *Ulalume*, but I am for its inclusion.

DE LA MARE. We have come down to modern times, and it behoves us to make sure that we have not overlooked anybody of first importance in this preliminary investigation

MOORE. Landor!

DE LA MARE. An august soul, and yet we overlooked him!

FREEMAN. Landor's prose has obscured the beauty of his verse.

DE LA MARE. I confess my ignorance, I will not say unblushingly but without hesitation, and I doubt, Freeman, if you know Landor much better than I do. But Moore reads little else, and will tell us what to seek in Landor.

MOORE. In *Gebir* a shepherd tells another how a nymph came up one night from the sea and engaged with him in a wrestling match, the terms of which were that he should receive *sinuous shells of pearly hue* if he were the victor, and that she should receive from him, if she were the victor, a sheep:

> Now came she forward eager to engage,
> But first her dress, her bosom then survey'd,
> And heav'd it, doubting if she could deceive.
> Her bosom seem'd, inclos'd in haze like heav'n,
> To baffle touch, and rose forth undefined:

Above her knee she drew the robe succinct,
Above her breast, and just below her arms.
This will preserve my breath when tightly bound,
If struggle and equal strength should so constrain
Thus, pulling hard to fasten it, she spake,
And, rushing at me, closed : I thrill'd throughout
And seem'd to lessen and shrink up with cold.
Again with violent impulse gusht my blood,
And hearing nought external, thus absorb'd,
I heard it, rushing through each turbid vein,
Shake my unsteady swimming sight in air.
Yet with unyielding though uncertain arms
I clung around her neck ; the vest beneath
Rustled against our slippery limbs entwined :
Often mine springing with eluded force
Started aside and trembled till replaced :
And when I most succeeded, as I thought
My bosom and my throat felt so comprest
That life was almost quivering on my lips,
Yet nothing was there painful : these are signs
Of secret arts and not of human might ;
What arts I can not tell ; I only know
My eyes grew dizzy and my strength decay'd ;
I was indeed o'ercome . . . with what regret,
And more, with what confusion, when I reacht
The fold, and yielding up the sheep, she cried,
This pays a shepherd to a conquering maid.
She smiled, and more of pleasure than disdain
Was in her dimpled chin and liberal lip,
And eyes that languisht, lengthening, just like love.
She went away ; I on the wicker gate
Leant, and could follow with my eyes alone.
The sheep she carried easy as a cloak ;
But when I heard its bleating, as I did
And saw, she hastening on, its hinder feet
Struggle, and from her snowy shoulder slip,

One shoulder its poor efforts had unveil'd,
Then all my passions mingling fell in tears ;
Restless then ran I to the highest ground
To watch her ; she was gone ; gone down the tide ;
And the long moon-beam on the hard wet sand
Lay like a jasper column half up-rear'd.

De La Mare. The lines :

And the long moon-beam on the hard wet sand
Lay like a jasper column half up-rear'd,

are very beautiful.

Moore. The incident is complete in itself, but we can have *The Hamadryad* if you don't like the poem. It surprises me, however, to find Landor writing *its* bleating, and a little lower down he speaks of *its* hinder feet, as if the sheep were an inanimate object. And the word *hooves* being available, I am puzzled to find a reason for *hinder feet.*

De La Mare. A poem of several hundred lines will destroy the symmetry of our anthology. None of the poems we have provisionally accepted exceeds a hundred.

Moore. A hundred lines, I think, was the length that a poem should never exceed, according to Poe, and the reason he gives is that a poem should be read in one uninterrupted mood of increasing exaltation. He wrote little and I have never read that he wrote with ease, as Shelley did, but he wrote certainly out of an emotive imagination ; his poems are almost free from thought, and that is why we have gathered so many in his tiny garden for our anthology. Another thing. He is one of the few modern poets who wrote with his eyes as well as his ears ; Browning saw nothing, Tennyson only a little and with an effort.

Freeman. Morris.

De La Mare. Poetry is not painting.

Moore. No ; nor is it music. Poetry stands between music and painting, sharing their qualities. We hear the word music applied to poetry, but poetry only touches on

music inasmuch as poetry and music both rejoice in rhythm. Music has intervals, and limiting music to the treble clef, to thirteen notes and to a singer's voice, which, if he be a good singer, has a range of two octaves, we get a richness of sound far beyond anything that ten syllables can give. But should the poet open his eyes and tell us all that his eyes see, as Morris did, Melpomene and Erato will not be judged less beautiful than their sisters. In *Golden Wings* our eyes and ears enjoy equally, and so complete is our enjoyment that whilst we read we clap our hands (speaking figuratively) and thank heaven that we have escaped at last from grey thoughtfulness into a world of things :

Midways of a walled garden,
In the happy poplar land,
Did an ancient castle stand,
With an old knight for a warden.

Many scarlet bricks there were
On its walls and old grey stone ;
Over which red apples shone
At the right time of the year.

On the bricks the green moss grew,
Yellow lichen on the stone,
Over which red apples shone ;
Little war that castle knew.

Deep green water fill'd the moat,
Each side had a red-brick lip,
Green and mossy with the drip
Of dew and rain ; there was a boat

Of carven wood, with hangings green
About the stern ; it was great bliss
For lovers to sit there and kiss
In the hot summer noons, not seen.

The poem takes its name, *Golden Wings*, from the lyric which Morris introduces into the narrative :

Gold wings across the sea,
Moonlight from tree to tree,
Gold hair beside my knee ;
Ah, sweet knight, come to me,
Gold wings across the sea.

Are not my blue eyes sweet ?
The west wind from the wheat
Blows cold across my feet ;
Is it not time to greet
Gold wings across the sea ?

I will not answer for the accuracy of the quotation.

De La Mare. May we include *The Lady of Shalott* ?

Moore. Certainly, the one poem whereby poor Tennyson justifies his existence. The knights as they ride in the morning early through the barley—how does it go, De La Mare, how does it go ?

De La Mare.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle leather,
The helmet and the helmet feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

Moore. How beautiful ! How like Morris !

De La Mare. It is not like Morris ; it is Morris.

Moore. And was written probably before Morris. I

remember now that the volume entitled *The Defence of Guenevere* was published in 'fifty-seven. *The Lady of Shalott* must have been written in the 'forties. But Tennyson had not the genius to continue the style that he had discovered accidentally, or he was beguiled and yielded himself to moralities and mumbled them till he was eighty.

FREEMAN. *The Lady of Shalott* comes well within our definition, but is it good enough? Is it a better lyric than:

> Now sleeps the crimson petal. now the white;
> Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;
> Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font:
> The fire-fly wakens: waken thou with me

DE LA MARE. Those verses will not get my vote. A better poem, in my opinion, is *Blow, bugle, blow.*

MOORE. You are forgetting the last verse:

> O love, they die in yon rich sky,
> They faint on hill or field or river;
> Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
> And grow for ever and for ever.
> Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
> And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

The Victorian could never reconcile himself to finishing a poem without speaking about the soul, and the lines are particularly vindictive. I really couldn't stand it, De La Mare:

> Our echoes roll from soul to soul,

and worse still:

> And grow for ever and for ever.

Are our souls then plants?

DE LA MARE. I had forgotten the soul, and the roll and the roll. Moreover, the first two stanzas are not good enough

for us to relax our conditions. I can think of nothing in Swinburne, unless the Spring Chorus from *Atalanta*; it begins well but ends lamely, and in one line he writes:

> And the hooféd heel of a satyr crushes
> The chestnut-husk at the chestnut root.

A chestnut has no husk; the outer shell is the shuck. And in the next stanza we read:

> And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,
> Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid.

You, Moore, do not like the word *feet* applied to hoofed animals, but I think we might concede something, for though Pan has hoofs Bacchus has not.

Moore. I do not see why he shouldn't have said *the fleet-hooved kid*, but I dare say I am pedantic. *Husk*, as you say, is not as correct as *shuck*, but these are not reasons for omitting the poem, and my vote is given to it.

De La Mare. And mine.

Freeman. And mine.

De La Mare. And now, Freeman, we must be thinking of our train to Anerley.

Moore. A drink of some sort before you start on this wild journey?

De La Mare. Nothing for me.

Freeman. Nor for me. We have worked well this evening, and laid down a foundation——

Moore. Of poetry and of morality.

Freeman. Of morality! Our aim has been to leave it out.

Moore. However slyly we build, morality always finds an unguarded loophole, and to stir up their languid emotions the younger poets and poetesses are obliged to engage themselves in marriage. I have heard that they often stoop, for the sake of a poem, to irregular relations; but we'll not go

into that. After playing at love for about a month or more the poem begins to curdle in their brains, and when that falls out the moment for parting has come. I see them in my thoughts going forth into the country ; stopping at the cross-roads they speak : My way is to the left, thine is to the right ; we have hoped and sorrowed together, and in future time . . . and so on, I think you know the rest of that poem, both of you.

De La Mare. There is a good deal of that poetry going about. Do you think we shall put an end to it by raising the standard ?

Freeman. Forgive me for interrupting you, De La Mare, but I would ask Moore if he has a title in mind for our anthology.

Moore. A title ? Of course ! *Pure Poetry.*

CHAP. XVII

Gosse (unlocking the wicket). We shall find a pleasant seat by the lake at the other end of the gardens.

Moore. And what more delightful than to sit discoursing by an evening lake, watching oars plying on a last voyage round the island.

Gosse. Whilst other boats return to the boathouse, beguiled by thoughts of supper, a thought that they will share with the crowd dispersing homeward along the opposite bank.

Moore. But why was I never invited before to participate in the pleasure of this garden ? Swards opening into such fair aspects that I shall be disappointed if the seat by the brimming lake is not overhung by an ilex.

Gosse. In the beginning these gardens were reserved for the residents of Hanover Terrace, but the County Council has decreed that such exclusiveness is out of keeping with the age we live in, and a few months hence people will share our delight.

Moore. We shall suffer and the people will not be happier, for nobody cares to go where all may go.

Gosse. The individual withers and the world grows more and more. But here is the seat, and though there be no ilex boughs above it, there's a handsome beech, and you are not one of those who would transform England into Sicily.

Moore. Ilexes are as common in England as in Sicily.

Gosse. The ilex is not one of our indigenous trees, and I doubt if our pleasure would be increased if we were to meet with one. It might, indeed, be lessened, for the classical associations of the ilex would draw our thoughts away from ourselves. Man is man's legitimate study, and in talk by this brimming lake we shall learn something that we did not know before of ourselves, and indirectly something we did not know of Theocritus. I would remark that we have not had the pleasure of your company for more than a month, an absence that can now be explained and atoned for by an account of the literary eggs you have been laying; some of the chicks within them must have broken their shells and are now running hither and thither pecking voraciously.

Moore. Pecking in my soul's garden till they have gotten wings to fly into other gardens—a hint of plagiarism.

Gosse. A vindictive twist given to my thought, which was then brooding in a little jealousy, for I have read in the newspapers that you are engaged in a play with Saint Paul for a hero. And as we have always been literary confidants——

Moore. Do not speak of this play, for it has come to naught; and, to put Theocritus and Landor behind us, I will drop into the language of *Esther Waters*, saying that I broke down about fifty yards from home, but whether the breakdown occurred in the back sinews or in the suspensory ligament I cannot tell.

Gosse. Look upon me as your vet; confide the circumstances. Was it on the near or the off?

Moore. My dear Gosse, I cannot expatiate in the story of my breakdown; when I tell you that to-morrow I shall send

two telegrams to America withdrawing the play from publication and a possible performance.

GOSSE. This is indeed stern criticism, and has been acted upon without friendly consultation.

MOORE. It is true that I am always seeking opinions, but I only act on yours, and if I didn't ask you about my play it was because I was afraid of boring you.

GOSSE. Have I ever shown any signs of boredom when you come to me with your difficulties? If you had come with this last one, I should have advised you to put the manuscript away in a drawer. But you dictate and are without manuscripts.

MOORE. I have withdrawn my play for the present, till I more fully realise Paul in the circumstances, for to some extent circumstances heighten or lower the man.

GOSSE. So Paul has been turned out to grass, and you stand gazing over the hedge.

MOORE. By no means. After a few sighs, a groan, a lamentation on the sordidness of the human lot, I bade farewell to him who has influenced the Western World more than any man that ever lived. The influence of Napoleon—what is it? And all the English poets—what influence have they exercised comparable to Paul's?

GOSSE. In the epic he was manageable but in the drama he has proved unmanageable. And your thoughts have turned —whither?

MOORE. To the editing of the twenty-volume edition which is in preparation in America.

GOSSE. I hope you limit your literary activities to the editing of your old books. I shudder at the thought lest you should alter a single word of your imaginary conversations with me.

MOORE. I am glad, Gosse, that you are satisfied with my interpretation of your ideas. But you can reassure yourself; I am not thinking of adding or withdrawing anything.

GOSSE. Additions trouble me less than omissions, but I am

troubled. Now, of what new writer will you speak ? Not of any of our contemporaries, I hope ! So long as I do not express any opinions derogatory to—I need not mention names.

Moore. No contemporary writer is the subject of my additions. You will remember that in the original conversations I made but a brief allusion to Anne Brontë, attributing my awakening to her story, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, or was it Shelley who awakened me in the cave of dreamy youth ? There are, of course, almost as many mental awakenings as there are physical. In *Confessions of a Young Man*, a book you have never read, perhaps, I tell how whilst driving in the family coach from Mayo to Galway I heard my parents talking of *Lady Audley's Secret*, and *Lady Audley's Secret* led me to read other books by Miss Braddon. After *Lady Audley's Secret* I read a book called, I think, *John Marchmont's Towers*, and then an adaptation of *Madame Bovary*, a seeming vanity ; but what would have happened to me if I had not read this vanity I cannot imagine, for the doctor's wife read Shelley and Byron assiduously. I am afraid I have told the story before, but it is difficult to avoid telling it here, for my age could not have been more than ten or eleven when I read *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and *The Sensitive Plant*. Shelley I discovered in our library ; *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* belonged to my governess, and it was for the sake of the wonderful name of Wildfell that I borrowed the book from her. In our published conversations, Gosse, I confessed (if I didn't, I should have confessed) that Anne's story of a passionate love that came to naught sent me to Castle Carra a little scared lest I had been born into a world in which nobody transgressed. And it is with my boyish dread of a sinless world that Anne is associated, with pity for her early death, coming before any taste of life, for a virgin's death is the very saddest thing that can befall. It was Anne who revealed this sadness to me, and I take this opportunity of paying my debt.

GOSSE. We have a vision of our own ;
Ah ! why should we undo it ?

are the words of a poet whose soul has passed into ours, and we should hearken to the wisdom that enjoins us not to return to Yarrow.

MOORE. It is long since I read the poem, and would ask you if the poet found Yarrow revisited merely dust and ashes

GOSSE. How long is it since you read *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* ?

MOORE. More than half a century ; but soon after our published conversations I sent to the library and was rewarded by the discovery——

GOSSE. That Anne Brontë was a greater writer than Balzac or Turgenev ?

MOORE. Despite the beauty of your prose, you fail to anticipate me. I did not think once of Balzac or Turgenev, but very often that if Anne Brontë had lived ten years longer she would have taken a place beside Jane Austen, perhaps even a higher place.

GOSSE. I think she died when she was seven-and-twenty, of consumption.

MOORE. Anne had all the qualities of Jane Austen and other qualities ; she could write with heat, one of the rarest qualities. Paul introduced heat into literature——

GOSSE. I would sooner hear you speak of Anne Brontë than Saint Paul.

MOORE. Well, then, Gosse, since you insist on directing my conversation, I will say that a young farmer is in love with the tenant of Wildfell Hall with a passion——

GOSSE. Forgive me for interrupting you again, but the last time I came to Ebury Street you read some lines from a paper you were writing about Miss Austen, and in speaking of *Sense and Sensibility* you say : Marianne reveals the burning human heart in English prose narrative for the first and the last time.

Moore. Your visits are celestial, Gosse, few and far between, but it was since your last visit that I re-read *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.* Anne broke down in the middle of her story, but her breakdown was not for lack of genius but of experience. An accident would have saved her ; almost any man of letters would have laid his hand upon her arm and said : You must not let your heroine give her diary to the young farmer, saying, ' Here is my story ; go home and read it.' Your heroine must tell the young farmer her story, and an entrancing scene you will make of the telling. Moreover, the presence of your heroine, her voice, her gestures, the questions that would arise and the answers that would be given to them, would preserve the atmosphere of a passionate and original love story. The diary broke the story in halves . . . As you haven't read the book for a long time, Gosse, you will allow me to recall to your remembrance the theme. The tenant of Wildfell Hall is a young and handsome woman who has rented the Hall and lives in almost complete seclusion, making no acquaintances ; she is rarely seen except when she goes forth to paint. The lonely figure painting woods and fields becomes a subject of gossip, and it is not long before the imaginations of the people discover in her the heroine of a sinful story—a discovery which helps, I take it, to plunge the young farmer headlong into that torment of passion which men rarely, if ever, have the power, I will not say of feeling, but of transferring into written words. Paul had it and was the first to translate the heart's heat without loss. The Lord Jesus was Saint Paul's inspiration ; the Lord Jesus was also Saint Teresa's inspiration ; in her we find the same heat as we do in the Epistles, and in Héloïse's letters to Abélard the paper on which they are written seems to shrivel up, so intense is the heat of her passion. I must not be afraid of repeating the word heat ; it is essential that I should repeat it, for what I am thinking of is heat and not violence, rhetoric or vehemence. You were good enough to remind me a few moments ago that I read

you some lines from a paper I was writing about Miss Austen, and you complimented me even to the extent of remembering my words, that in *Sense and Sensibility* we find the burning human heart in English prose narrative for the first and the last time. When I read you those few lines *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* was a dim memory going back more than fifty years—a child's appreciation of a book he got from his governess. But on reading it again I said : The farmer goes to the Hall consumed by the same almost animal emotion that consumed Marianne when she went up to London in search of Willoughby.

Gosse. But surely there are more than traces of the heat you speak of in her sisters' works ?

Moore. *Wuthering Heights* is written with vehemence, with eloquence, but there's very little heat in it, if any. The quality of heat I don't put forward as a very high literary quality ; it doesn't exist in Shakespeare, in Dante, in Homer ; but it's the rarest of literary qualities.

Gosse. An emotion enkindled by spiritual or physical love. I think you exaggerate its rarity, and that were an adequate search made for it in the works of religious reformers you would have to add to your list. I am not sure you would not have to add Saint Augustine. In your story *The Lake* you give some stanzas from an Irish poem. A peasant, I believe you say the author was, a native of County Cork, who wandered demented about the country and expressed his sorrow at least in one beautiful poem, if I may judge by the extract.

Moore. A very beautiful poem indeed it must be, if we may judge it by T. W. Rolleston's beautiful translation.

Gosse. But Saint Augustine—what have you got to say about the passage where he and his mother stand by a window overlooking the river, the Tiber, I think ? Or was it when he visited his mother in Milan ? If so, it was the Arno.

Moore. I remember the passage as you do, vaguely. I think the scene you speak of occurred at Ostia, where his mother died. But may we not leave the question of heat in

literature to be decided another day, and return to Anne Brontë, whose weaving of the narrative in the first hundred and fifty pages of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* reveals a born tale-teller, just as the knotted and tangled threads in *Wuthering Heights* reveal the desperate efforts of a lyrical poet to construct a prose narrative? I heard you once say that outside of his special gift a man is often a poor creature. The remark was instigated by Swinburne's attempts to write prose tales, and a story is told of Beethoven, who, after a quarrel, said: Whosoever can write a symphony can cook a dinner. His friends did not think so; nor do I think that Emily, whose poems are above Anne's as the stars are above the earth, was intended by Nature to write prose narratives, and for different reasons Charlotte failed too; she wrote well —all three wrote well—but good writing did not help her, for she was afflicted with much congenital commonplace. The true artist is neither esoteric nor commonplace; he captures the world with broad human sympathies and woos and wins his fellows with his craft. Mrs. Gaskell, the most commonplace of all English writers——

Gosse. That seems rather hard.

Moore. I only read one book of hers, a story called *Phyllis*, a very lack-lustre story indeed; out of the pages rises the image of a meek-voiced, almost witless widow sitting by her fire-place, a kettle singing on the hob.

Gosse. As I think I have told you before, you very often have something to say that's worth saying, but you are apt to spoil it by exaggeration. . . . I agree with you that the diary was a mistake and that it would have been better if the heroine had told her story herself; but I think Anne would have answered the literary friend who laid his hand on her arm that if she had allowed her heroine to tell her story it would not have filled more than a couple of pages, and for Anne to get her book published she had at least to fill two hundred more.

Moore. Whosoever is possessed of the gift of narrative

can fashion a story as it pleases him, and I have no faintest doubt that Anne would have discovered new matter for the required length. I prefer to think that she fell into one of those pitfalls—I know them well—with which tale-telling is beset. . . . But you may be right.

Gosse. I hope I am not right, for yours is the nobler explanation. But do you find sufficient support in the first half of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* to justify you in saying that Anne's genius exceeded her sisters' genius, and that if she had lived for ten years more we should all be speaking of her as a rival to Jane Austen?

Moore. No, indeed. If Anne had written nothing but *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* I should not have been able to predict the high place she would have taken in English letters. All I should have been able to say is: An inspiration that comes and goes like a dream. But, her first story, *Agnes Grey*, is the most perfect prose narrative in English literature.

Gosse. The most perfect prose narrative in English literature, and overlooked for fifty-odd years!

Moore. The blindness of criticism should not surprise one as well acquainted with the history of literature as you are. You have noticed, no doubt, that I avoid whenever I can the word fiction, for the word has become degraded by association with circulating libraries and has come to mean novels that sell for six months and are never heard of afterwards. *Agnes Grey* is a prose narrative simple and beautiful as a muslin dress. I need not remind you, Gosse, that it's more difficult to write a simple story than a complicated one. The arrival of Agnes at the house of her employer (she is the new governess) opens the story, and the first sentences, the eating of a beefsteak is among the first, convince us that we are with a quick, witty mind, capable of appreciating all she hears and sees; and when Agnes begins to tell us of her charges and their vulgar parents, we know that we are reading a masterpiece. Nothing short of genius could have set them before us so plainly and yet with restraint—even the incident

of the little boy who tears a bird's nest out of some bushes and fixes fish hooks into the beaks of the young birds so that he may drag them about the stable-yard. Agnes's reprimands, too, are low in tone, yet sufficient to bring her into conflict with the little boy's mother, who thinks that her son's amusement should not be interfered with. The story was written, probably, when Anne Brontë was but two or three and twenty, and it is the one story in English literature in which style, characters and subject are in perfect keeping. In writing it Anne's eyes were always upon the story itself and not upon her readers ; a thought does not seem to have come into her mind that a reader would like a little more drama, a little more comedy, that a picnic or a ball would provide entertainment. Whilst writing about Agnes Grey's first set of pupils she had in mind Agnes's second set, and was careful that the first situation should lead up to the second. Agnes is not dismissed, nor does she even, as well as I remember, leave for any definite reason. The house had become disagreeable to her and she leaves, rests for a while at home, and hearing of a situation in which she would have the charge of two growing girls, she accepts it, and the reader is relieved to find Agnes, whom he has begun to appreciate, among less harsh surroundings. One of her pupils is about to pass out of the schoolroom into the world ; the other is a sort of tomboy who likes kittens and puppies, and the society of the stable-yard and harness-room better than that of the drawing-room, her hour not having yet come. At the end of the first term, a term of six months or a year, Agnes Grey goes home, and after a short holiday she returns to her pupils, very tired, for the journey has been a long one. But whilst Agnes has been resting at home Miss Murray has been to her first ball, and Agnes must really come to the schoolroom at once to hear all about it. And so absorbed is Miss Murray in herself, in her dress, in her partners, in the flowers that were given to her, in the words that were spoken to her during the dances and the sitting-out in quiet corners, that she fails to

perceive how inappropriate the occasion is for the telling of her successes. Agnes Grey gives all the attention she can give to her pupil, but is too tired to respond, and Miss Murray, feeling, no doubt, that Agnes thinks she is exaggerating her successes, insists still further : As for *me*, Miss Grey—I'm so *sorry* you didn't see me ! I was *charming*—wasn't I, Matilda ? And the younger sister, who has not been to the ball, answers :

Middling.

The word lights up the narrative like a ray of light cast by Ruysdael into the middle of a landscape.

Gosse. I am afraid you writers of prose narratives appreciate other people's narratives only when you find your own qualities in them.

Moore. What you say is most unjust. You have read a great deal of poetry, but your appreciations of poetry are not limited to the exact qualities you possess yourself. Why, therefore, should you think that I cannot appreciate anything that is not part of my own possession ?

Gosse. I don't think it's quite the same thing. . . . But tell me what becomes of the governess.

Moore. She makes the acquaintance of a curate and visits the alms-houses with him, and here Anne rises to greater heights in patter than Jane Austen, for Jane's patter is drawing-room patter, whilst Anne's patter is in Yorkshire jargon. I don't know if you will acquiesce in my belief that the language of the fields is more beautiful than that of the town, and that the cottage supplies better stuff for art than the drawing-room.

Gosse. Not better than the palace. Shakespeare——

Moore. Wouldn't it be just as well to leave Shakespeare out of this argument ?

Gosse. You haven't told me yet what becomes of Agnes Grey ?

Moore. She leaves her situation and goes, I think, to recover her health by the sea, and meeting on the esplanade

the parson with whom she visited the alms-houses—he has gone there for his vacation——

GOSSE. The end of the walk is an engagement!

MOORE. And why shouldn't it be? The simple is never commonplace

GOSSE. The commonplace is yesterday's artifices, and I will admit that I have often wondered why criticism should have raised up thrones for Charlotte and Emily, leaving Anne in the kitchen.

MOORE. A sort of literary Cinderella.

GOSSE. A blindness of fifty years of which you have no cause to complain, since it has called you to fulfil the part of the fairy godmother.

MOORE. Critics follow a scent like hounds, and I am not certain that it wasn't Charlotte who first started them on their depreciation of Anne. I cannot give chapter and verse here, but in one of her introductions she certainly apologises for *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, pleading extenuating circumstances: Anne's youth, her sickness, her inexperience of life. Three phthisis-stricken sisters living on a Yorkshire moor, and all three writing novels, were first-rate copy, and Charlotte's little depreciations of the dead were a great help, for three sisters of equal genius might strain the credulity of the readers of the evening newspapers. Such insight as would enable the journalist to pick out the right one would be asking too much of journalism.

GOSSE. Could you have picked out the right?

MOORE. Not at the time of the publication of Anne's books, but fifty years is a long while to wait. My case against Charlotte does not end with an implicit defamation of her sister, for in her novel *Villette* she is guilty of the most barefaced plagiarism. We may rob the dead, but not the just departed, and of all the poor dead sister hardly yet cold in her coffin. Like her sisters, Charlotte wrote well, but she did not write out of the imaginations of her mind, and, the first volume of *Villette* being almost an autobiography, her talent

rises all the while ; but the story needed in the second volume a girl representative of her sex, something more than a tracing of Charlotte's own youth, and so it came to pass that Charlotte found herself constrained to lay hands on Miss Murray, which she could do easily, a mere change of name being enough to hide the theft, for nobody had read *Agnes Grey*.

GOSSE. Love is said to be blind, but if all that you say is true, criticism is even blinder, for though many charges have been brought against Charlotte, plagiarism is not one of them.

MOORE. The critics of the Brontës were interested more in Charlotte's flirtation with the schoolmaster in Belgium, which, if it were true, mattered very little, and if it were not, didn't matter at all. But you, Gosse, should not have allowed Charlotte to climb the wall by means of somebody else's ladder and then to kick it away.

GOSSE. As I have not read *Agnes Grey* I must take your remarks on trust, but I will read the story.

MOORE. I wish you would, and write an article about Anne, for then the truth would become known.

GOSSE. Why not write it yourself? The story is true to you, and to me it is only a partial truth.

MOORE. Were I to write it, it would be looked upon as one of my paradoxes, or a desire to tread upon somebody's corns. But as soon as you begin to read, the story will possess you and you will long to reveal the true Charlotte and her patrons, the dinner at the publishers, and the dinner at Thackeray's, a dozen pompous men standing before the fire, their coat-tails lifted, their eyes fixed on the timid girl who had discovered bigamy and written it out all by herself. The nostrils of the twentieth century like not the smell of these broken victuals, and yet——

GOSSE. And yet the lake darkens and the loiterers along the waterside have disappeared ; probably gone home to supper, every one. I'll let you out at the farther gate.

CHAP. XVIII

MOORE (handing Granville-Barker a cigar). A cigar is welcome after reading; the spell of the Corona enjoins silence; but we may listen without losing any of the fragrance if the comment be favourable. Mine will provoke certainly no argument in you; you may even be glad to hear that the thought that returned to me again and again was: A dramatist's play, without trace of the novel, the poem, or the sonnet in it. Few are faithful to one literary form, chosen from the beginning. Even Ibsen was a transgressor; he wrote some poems. Pater! Of course, there is Pater—like you, an exemplar of literary fidelity, his genius saving *Marius* again and again from drifting into the novel; and in *Imaginary Portraits* he was not less true to his genius, suave and punctilious——

GRANVILLE-BARKER. Then you like the play you have just heard better than——

MOORE. Yes, better than *The Voyse's Inheritance*, better than *The Madras House*, and better than——

GRANVILLE-BARKER. I shall not take it as a compliment if you like my new play better than *Waste*, which you did not like at all. I gave it to you to read when I was lying stricken with typhoid fever in a Dublin lodging.

MOORE. And every evening I read an act and every morning I came to tell you how much I admired the construction, the dialogue, and the characters.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. But you found faults.

MOORE. About one incident in the play my feelings cannot change.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. And the incident to which you take exception is the very one from which the action of the play springs.

MOORE. No, Granville-Barker, I do not take exception to the incident from which the action of the play springs, but to

the shrubbery in which it occurs. I can understand a pursuit through a garden, a terrace, or a park, but not through laurels, a shrub so gloomy that if there had been any in the vale of Menalus, Pan's hooves would have lagged or turned aside and the reed not been cut to which he owes his redemption from the beast. Your shrubbery, I admit, is but a trivial objection ; a more serious criticism of *Waste* is your politician's lack of courtesy.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. Courtesy was not a characteristic of the politician I had in mind. But if you admit the chase——

MOORE. Admit the chase, Barker ! But who could deny the right of chase ? so long as it is conducted with courtesy.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. I am afraid your meaning escapes me. I'll ask you to speak more plainly.

MOORE. In writing an elaborate work something is overlooked, and not seldom something essential. In writing *Waste* you do not seem to have remembered that to kiss a lady once is most impolite.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. My politician's transgression was barely possible, but it was possible once. A second kiss would have been a vulgarity.

MOORE. A thing so deeply implanted in human nature as a kiss, Barker, cannot, I think, be considered vulgar. And being a man of the eighteenth century (the eighteenth century continued in Ireland till 1870), I expected you to make amends for the shrubbery by introducing your characters to us in an arbour, on a terrace or a balcony.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. William took Esther Waters on the Downs once and then abandoned her, so will you tell me how my politician differs from your footman ?

MOORE. If Esther and William did not walk out again on the Downs, the fault lay not with William but with Esther. Her violent temper——

GRANVILLE-BARKER. A quick parry of yours, Moore.

MOORE. For a moment I was embarrassed, so quick was your thrust, and remembered only just in time——

GRANVILLE-BARKER. We will forget this passage of wits in which neither is worsted, and you'll tell me what you think of the new play.

MOORE. My impression is, after a first hearing, that the new play is the best you have written. The qualities of craftsmanship, of course, are the same as in your other plays : a very subtle and yet apparently easy construction, pointed dialogue, never a word wasted.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. But I thought you preferred abundance to reticence, Shakespeare's method to Ibsen's.

MOORE. I never think about methods, and when I read in the newspapers that a play is not technically a play, I lay the paper aside.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. And you are right. There are plays of all kinds, and all we ask is that the writer shall produce a play good of its kind.

MOORE. You condemn monologues——

GRANVILLE-BARKER. Not always. I wrote to you that the three or four lines of monologue with which you begin *The Apostle* were unnccessary, admitting, however, that they might annoy our friend Archer.

MOORE. I have dedicated the play to you.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. I am honoured.

MOORE. And hope that one or two monologues and perhaps an aside will not blind you to other merits, should any be discoverable.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. And you are pleased with *The Apostle*, now that you have finished it to the last revision of the last comma ?

MOORE. No correspondence with managers, no rehearsals, no withdrawing the play from rehearsals—an admirable play !

GRANVILLE-BARKER. But from what you told me and from what I saw in your first draft, the play seemed to me designed for the stage.

MOORE. The stage was in my mind as fourteen lines are in the mind of him who sits down to write a sonnet.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. The characters of Jesus and his Apostle are treated with much reverence; the Archbishops could hardly have treated them with more; and the Censor being no longer adamantine, it might be worth while asking a management to send the play to his office.

MOORE. There is not an irreverent word in the play, but I doubt if the Censor could pass it even if he wished to do so.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. You may be right, and that a Jesus who does not die on the cross conflicts too flagrantly with current theology.

MOORE. The play may be acted in America; America is full of unitarians. It may be acted in Germany, or in Paris, even in England privately; if I have succeeded in representing Saint Paul in all his instincts and attributions, he will not escape the ambition of a great actor.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. Who will know little ease till he has been seen in the part, which he will, mayhap, illuminate by his genius. You are content to wait?

MOORE. I do not attach overmuch importance to a performance.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. And you throw the book on the waters, hoping that the bait will be swallowed by some greedy fish.

MOORE. It occurred to me that it would be as well to give *The Coming of Gabrielle* to the Tauchnitz Library, and the Manager of the National Theatre, Prague, picked the play up from a bookstall and decided to produce it.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. I shall print my play.

MOORE. I hope you will, for the publication will attract and prepare the public for literary drama.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. You live in London (I in Devon and Italy), and may be able to tell me if people are beginning to weary of trash.

MOORE. The public accept what the managers give them, and if an author has written books, especially well-written books, if his name, I mean, be connected with literature, the manager begins to sniff danger, for we have no record of a

successful literary play. Of course we haven't; literature is never literary. And the manager is duped by the high-brow, and the high-brow in turn is duped by the disagreeable: Else I should drop, he says, into the commonplace. The literary papers shriek: Literature At Stake! but the public heed them not. The manager puts on *Cocoanut Ice* and gets a run of three hundred nights. *The Two-Seater* follows and gets a run of four hundred nights. And once more literature is discredited by the 'literary.'

GRANVILLE-BARKER. As the theatre cannot be suppressed, a Bill will be introduced into Parliament for its reformation sooner or later. There will be hitches and delays——

MOORE. There will indeed; for the roots of Puritanism are so deep in England that at the first hint of a National Theatre theology and morals will be massed against us, and the question will be asked in both Houses of Parliament if it be just that the tax-payer should put his hand into his pocket to pay for what he does not want, indeed for what he actively dislikes.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. You talk like one who is opposed to a National Theatre.

MOORE. No, not opposed, but in doubt whether art can be beckoned. Art comes to a country and flourishes in it for a while, and then leaves it, never to return.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. It may be so; so far as you know, it is so. But to-morrow may prove your theory to be wrong. Why furnish the opposition with arguments?

MOORE. Our logic will not bring us any nearer to a National Theatre. We shall get it (if we get it), because it is desired, and I do not think the opposition will borrow my metaphysics to confute us. The argument that will be produced against us will be such as the plain man in the street can understand. He will ask, and his spokesman in Parliament, who duplicates him, will ask: For what purpose are plays written? He will answer his question himself: To please. And for whom does the playwright cater? The answer comes pat: The public.

Who, therefore, are more capable of judging plays than the general public? And if the general public be admitted as competent judges, why set up another standard? The general public have always supported Shakespeare; Shakespeare is good. Answer me that if you can. And he sits down confident in the triumph of commonsense over the sophistries of the crank.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. The voice of the politician whose mouthpiece you are for the moment will be heard certainly in Parliament, but I would have you remember that many voices will be heard, and that it is not to the voice of the rook or the jay the mob listen.

MOORE. The mob will listen to the nightingale, I know, because the nightingale sings for nothing.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. It surprises me to find you on the side of the mob.

MOORE. Not on the side of the mob, but their spokesman for the nonce, as you have said. I read in your book that the cost of a National Theatre would be a million. I always calculated that the sum required would be about five hundred thousand pounds.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. That was before the war. The cost would now be a million.

MOORE. Half of which, I understand, would go to the building of the theatre. And when the Bill comes before Parliament the question will be put: Why build a new theatre? Why not buy one of the theatres already in existence and save five hundred thousand pounds? I am not expressing my opinion, Barker, but anticipating an argument.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. My answer to the heckler is simple: Sir, you lack the civic sense. The business of the National Theatre is not the exclusive production of modern plays. I would not ban modern plays—who would, if we get a good play? And by a good play I do not mean a play that will run as long as a public house, but one that will encourage

and enrapture those who seek pleasure in thought. In my little speech to the caviller whom you are representing at this moment, I would say that the business of a National Theatre is the glorification of London. I said just now that you lacked the civic sense, sir. Perhaps I should have worded my reproof differently and said: You are forgetful for the moment of the civic sense, which is your possession as much as mine. And to recall the civic sense to your consciousness I would remind you that we might destroy a great deal of London without destroying London; leave us our buildings, and London would still be London. But think, sir, if you can, of London without Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's. These and the beautiful churches that throng our streets may not be as useful as garages, and for this reason there are many among us who would pull down our churches, pleading that they are without sufficient congregations, and that the thoroughfares need widening for a freer circulation of traffic and a more rapid passage of motor cars. The abolition of the National Gallery would long ago have been advocated if our utilitarians did not feel that they might find themselves in the minority (an unpardonable sin), and for the moment they prefer to justify the National Gallery as a place where young women and young men go to study the art of painting.

Moore. As well might they study Chaucer with a view to qualifying for the post of Sub-Editor on one of our dailies. Only the great artist can study the past with impunity; he understands at a glance, and passes on. We must live in our own time; a modern theatre will serve us better than an archaic. Let us consider the sites that have occurred to you, Barker, as suitable for a National Theatre.

Granville-Barker. It has often been in my mind to petition the King to concede a corner of St. James's Park——

Moore. A theatre in St. James's Park! How wonderful! Go on talking, Granville-Barker. I like listening to you; go on talking.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. But for the King to concede two or three acres of St. James's Park would be the thin end of the wedge. I'm sorry I can't think of a newer simile.

MOORE. Nobody has ever thought of a better one. The thin end goes on for ever, like the roseate fingers of the dawn. But you were saying ?

GRANVILLE-BARKER. I was saying that if the King were to grant us a site in St. James's Park for a National Theatre, other requests would come to him—for a college——

MOORE. Or for a school of art, or for a museum where stuffed birds would be shown to gaping children. You did well, Granville-Barker, to put St. James's Park out of your mind as a convenient site for the National Theatre.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. Westminster has been long in my mind as the site we require. Westminster Hall was built in the reign of William Rufus. . . . You say you like listening to me, but I can see your thoughts are away.

MOORE. I admit that my thoughts strayed from you to your book, *The Exemplary Theatre*, for I suddenly remembered that in your long conversation with the Minister of Education you based your claim for a National Theatre on the educational advantages thereof.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. There was much else in my book besides the long talk with the Minister of Education, which I admit was a mistake.

MOORE. That is what is so winning to you, Barker. You are ready always to confess a mistake, and thereby you weaken your opponent's defence. The day your book arrived from the *Times* office I was writing an article pointing out that the twentieth century had come to believe that by the aid of a curriculum an almost perfect uniformity of intelligence can be obtained, and on opening your book the first thing that met my eye was the long conversation between you and Mr. Fisher. How can I review this book ? I asked myself. Granville-Barker places his demand for a National Theatre on an altogether false basis.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. You would not say that listening to a play by Shakespeare, nobly interpreted, is of no avail?

MOORE. In one instance it may meet with a response. But I have little belief in the boy who reads Shakespeare, much more in the literary future of the boy who likes swinging on a gate in Maytime in front of a meadow flooded with sun and shadow, his soul elated by the songs of the willow-wrens flitting in the sprouting larches.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. You have always been averse from education. I remember a phrase in a little book you wrote many years ago, *Confessions of a Young Man*: We never learn anything that we did not know before.

MOORE. Meaning thereby that a man cannot be taught. But though he cannot be taught, he can learn, meaning thereby that he may discover a self within himself. I am thinking of the gift a man brings into the world, for that is a man's true self, and the gift, if he be possessed of a real gift, can only be discovered by himself; it may even be argued that this gift awakes in him suddenly, and to his own great surprise.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. But how is a man to learn a trade—a carpenter, for instance? Nor is it likely that he will invent dove-tailing by himself or out of his imagination. Do you know what dove-tailing is?

MOORE. Indeed I do, and have practised it. It is in the workshop that a man learns a trade, not in the school. I was told this morning of a boy who had been taught metal-work and had passed all the London County Council tests, but when he made application to a silversmith for a place in his shop as an improver, a grade higher than an apprentice, the silversmith found he could do nothing with him. He tried all the boys the County Council sent him, but preferred in the end to take an ignorant boy and teach him from the beginning. And this is not the only story which I can cite in support of my belief that we never learn anything that we

did not know before. I heard this morning of a boy who was crushed between a wall and a wagon when he was five, and the question was debated between parents and doctors whether the leg was to be taken off from the hip-joint. The parents decided that it would be better for the boy to die than to lose his leg, and he was allowed to crawl about the floor for five years, teaching himself a little reading and writing. At ten he began to recover the use of his limb; then the doctors took him in hand, and their treatment was so successful that at fourteen he was able to choose a trade. He said: I'll be a blacksmith. Nobody ever could tell why he said that; he didn't know himself; probably a horseshoe nailed to the wall captured his imagination. Be that as it may, he lived to eighty-two and left a fortune of four thousand pounds to be distributed among his relatives. Martyrs are beginning to appear; not long ago a mother said she would prefer to go to prison rather than send her son to school after he was fourteen, urging on the magistrate that the time to learn a trade was between fourteen and sixteen. Whilst admitting her contention to be reasonable, the magistrate could not avoid sending her to prison, for such is the law. She accepted prison, heroic woman, and it is heroism such as hers that may in the end redeem us from a system that comes between man and his instincts. But education is being found out; the other day an architect published an admirable letter telling how time is wasted in examinations, and the new demand of the teachers for higher salaries is making plain that education is of no help to anybody except teachers and that section of the Labour party which needs wastrels. But we are wasting time, Barker.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. If preaching to the converted be wasting time, you are wasting it certainly, for I am willing, more than willing, eager to admit that my attempt to couple the National Theatre with Mr. Fisher's curriculum was indeed a mistake.

MOORE. You found Mr. Fisher a little obtuse?

GRANVILLE-BARKER. Absent-minded, rather—his mind bent on a new curriculum.

MOORE. We will leave him meditating it, and discuss instead the play that should open the National Theatre.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. I have nothing to say against *Hamlet*.

MOORE. Nor have I. Better to begin with a masterpiece than to strive to appeal to sentimentality, announcing that the National Theatre will open with the story of England as told by Shakespeare in the chronicle plays.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. You are weary of the story of England?

MOORE. I would like Shakespeare better if people would leave off writing about him. Your advertisement will be applauded until the balance sheet is published, and then your praisers will begin to talk economies. The National Theatre need not make both ends meet, but the hiatus must not run into tens of thousands. If we get a National Theatre you will need all your courage and determination. The pedagogues will ask for nothing but Shakespeare, and for the whole of Shakespeare, forgetful of the fact that the human mind cannot assimilate more than three hours of text. I once heard the whole of *Hamlet*—five hours and a half. The first act lasted two hours and was very wonderful, as wonderful as *The Ring*, but when we came to the fourth and the fifth acts I found it impossible to keep my mind on the stage, and so brain-weary was I that I couldn't have told blank verse from prose, nor could I have sworn that some passages from the *Daily Mail* were not being introduced. It takes five hours and a half to play *The Meistersingers* without cuts, and when we arrive at the glories of Nüremberg we don't know what we are listening to; our minds are away; and it is not until we of wisdom prepense cut an act and a half that we can appreciate the end of Wagner's opera. Another difficulty will be to decide what is Shakespeare. You will take advantage, I suppose, of the fact that *Titus Andronicus* is not generally believed to be written by him, and omit that play from your repertory *Pericles*, too, is certainly not

by Shakespeare, and that you will probably omit. Another thing: the National Theatre will not be confined entirely to the acting of Shakespeare. You will seek among his contemporaries, if the pedagogues will allow you to, and find a pleasant change of diet in Jonson, whose plots, unfortunately, are not always very explicit, and there's nothing more wearisome than a play one cannot follow. I doubt very much if there are many people who can follow the story of *Every Man in His Humour*, but the first three acts of *Volpone* are admirable. You'll have to decide if the last two might not be shortened. Ford's play, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, was received with enthusiasm when the Phœnix Society produced it. Your productions will be finer than anything the Phœnix, with little time and money at its disposal, can do. I am sorry that you are not to be the first to show the Elizabethans on the modern stage—Marlowe, Jonson, Fletcher—for he who has tasted of the Elizabethans eschews modern drama, and it would have been a fine sport to astonish London, weary of small adulteries, with Elizabethan stories of murder and incest, written when the language was sappy. But no man gets all that he asks for, and you would not cherish jealousy of a gallant little Society whose ambition it is to serve as a stop-gap till some Conservative or Liberal Government grants a site and a subvention. If you had been able to hold out any hope to us of a National Theatre, Lady Cunard would not have hesitated to propose a dissolution of the Society.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. Lady Cunard takes an important part in your deliberations.

MOORE. She is our President. The Phœnix owed three hundred pounds, but at one of the last performances the announcement was made that a benefactor or a benefactress, who did not wish his or her name to be known, had paid the debt. I hasten to say that I do not attribute the paying of the debt to Lady Cunard; I know no more than any other member of the Phœnix Society. I am not of the inner circle;

only this can I say, that there are few of the Phœnix who have not heard it reported that her influence counted for much in getting the money that saved the *Old Vic*. Among much that is uncertain it seems certain that without Lady Cunard we should not have had a London opera season in 1921. Does our last opera season go back to 1920? I do not know. My admiration for this warm-hearted, courageous woman compels me to praise her whenever her name is mentioned, and to recall to the remembrance of everybody that she is the one woman in London society whose thought for art extends beyond the narrow range of ordering a portrait to be painted and setting on foot an intrigue for the hanging of it in the National Gallery. I stop without having said all, Barker, for I would tell you that the performance given by the Phœnix of *Love for Love* revealed to a select London audience the unsuspected fact that we have once more amongst us a great comedy actress—Athene Seyler.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. A very remarkable actress——

MOORE. No more than remarkable in the trashy comedies you have seen her in, but in a masterpiece she is easily the greatest comedy actress I have ever seen, and I have seen many great comedy actresses.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. I regret that you did not write about her and Congreve.

MOORE. All but you, who could appreciate one and the other, were in the theatre.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. It is true that I have ceased to be a Londoner. All the more reason why you should write about the Phœnix.

MOORE. My article need not go to Devon for you to read it. You can hear it in this room, if you like. Your cigar is not yet finished?

GRANVILLE-BARKER. I am only half-way through the excellent cigar you have given me, and have little hope that its excellence can be enhanced by silence. All the same, read. I am listening.

MOORE. I have poured my memories into the ear of an imaginary journalist.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. Read. My cigar is burning excellently well.

MOORE (reading):

MAID. A gentleman from the *Observer* has called, sir. Will you see him?

MOORE. Yes, I'll see him.

MAID. Mr. Deacon.

MOORE. No, I'm not busy, Mr. Deacon. I am never too busy to talk about art. Let me give you a chair, and when you are seated you'll put questions to me. But before you put the first will you allow me to talk to you a little while about the mysterious disappearance of the nine Muses from England, indeed I might say from the planet we inhabit, for search it from sea to sea and neither Calliope, Melpomene, nor Erato——

MR. DEACON. It is true that we have lost many of the Muses, but Terspichore——

MOORE. You have mentioned the Muse, Mr. Deacon, in whom I am least interested. Terpsichore, I admit, is not easily avoided in London, and we cannot get the music she demands out of our ears; it leaves us little peace. But her great sisters are nowhere to be discovered, and many think they have followed the Gods, who, Heine tells us, went into exile in the third century; others think that they have hidden themselves in the laboratories of scientists to whom they whisper secrets of poisonous gases, having become diabolic, like Wagner's Venus. I have borrowed the thought from Baudelaire, who suggests that the Erecine became diabolic among ages that would no longer accept her as divine, and what more natural than that the eight (Terpsichore is admittedly with us still) should conspire to destroy a world that no longer follows beauty? I hope you will take note, Mr. Deacon, of the valuable hint I have just thrown out to account for the disappearance of the

eight, and that your Editor will reserve some columns of his newspaper for a correspondence on the subject of the present occupation of the Muses, whether they have really left the planet, or are engaged in planning the destruction of a civilisation concerned only with truth and knowledge. . . . I know what you are going to say, my dear sir : that want of space will prevent your Editor from considering in detail the very interesting question I have raised. I have had much to do with Editors, and know that their point of view is with affirmations rather than with negations. Now, if the correspondence I suggest were concerned with the return of the Muses, the matter would be different and he would be glad to publish a letter on the subject. You will tell him that although I cannot anticipate the return of the missing eight, I would like to point out in his valuable newspaper that the tenth Muse arrived some five years ago and at once devoted herself to the revival of the ancient art of music in England, and, when her project for English opera went into bankruptcy, descended at once into the Phœnix Society and found her reward in an unbroken series of successes. I know what you are going to say ; you are going to tell me that the Phœnix rises out of her own ashes. My remembrance is that art always rises out of its own ashes. Why, therefore, should not the revival of the Elizabethans give birth to a new form of drama, unless indeed you cling to the belief that to have culture we must have long periods without culture, a theory which is difficult to rebut, for the fact that the world was without art from the sixth to the thirteenth century is the thought of everybody who thinks about art seriously. Your face, Mr. Deacon, is very readable. I gather from it that you were about to ask me if I had attended all the performances, and to my great regret I answer that I have missed two or three ; and of the performances I missed the one I regret the least is a certain play by John Dryden, though I am told that Athene Seyler's genius was even

brighter in *Mariage à la Mode* than it was in *Love for Love*, an appreciation that betrays a certain insensibility of eye and ear to the shades which divide good verse from bad. For in reading the Elizabethans we are in salt water always ; the verse is buoyant. Dryden's verse may be compared to a brackish lake, languid and muddy, and the rough words that rise to our lips express the change : The kick has gone out of it.

Mr. Deacon. Dryden, then, in your opinion, was the last of the Elizabethans ?

Moore. Rather the beginning of Grub Street, and that is why I cannot believe that Athene Seyler showed to greater advantage in Dryden than in Congreve. Whilst trying to collect my thoughts for this interview which you have been kind enough to come to report, I rose suddenly from my chair, saying : An actress's charm in a play cannot be put into words, at least not by me. And then stopping, I added : It's all clear enough till I try to write it ; to-morrow the commonplace awaits me ; and I went upstairs to dress myself for dinner. I was dining with Mr. Arnold Bennett, and after dinner a lady played Mozart's Sonata in D Major, and the gaiety and the instinctive elegance of the music recalling my memories of Athene in Congreve's comedy, I said to myself : She was to the play what Mozart's music is to his librettist, incessant, always at it. She alights and breaks into song abruptly, like a bird. She listens, and we sit amused, enchanted by the sallies of her witty eyes, by the beat of her feet. Her very clothes catch inspiration, and she adapts her gait to the character and every gesture, each adding an accent. Any omission would be a loss, any addition an excess.

Mr. Deacon. If Athene be in reality what she is in your memory, she is an actress comparable to Sara or Aimée Desclée (I think her name was Aimée).

Moore. I am glad to hear you speak of her as Athene. Rachel is known to us only as Rachel, and Sara Bernhardt

was Sara for the greater part of her life. And her death having made her an actuality, I will tell you that Halévy, who saw the three French actresses, looked upon Sara as the least, a long way behind Rachel in tragedy and as far behind Desclée in comedy.

Mr. Deacon. Did he give reasons for his preference ?

Moore. I did not press him to give reasons ; his reasons seemed obvious to me, for I was thinking of Sara's usual indifference to the play she was acting in, putting herself always in front of it, using it as a means for a cunning display of her tricks and mannerisms, and certain moments of it for an exhibition of theatrical passion in which the play and some handkerchiefs were torn into rags. Halévy could not approve of such an interpretation ; no author could, I no more than Halévy, and I felt with Halévy and for Halévy when I saw Sara walk through two acts of *Frou-Frou* and part of the third act, conveying no impression of the play, nor even of herself, seeming as commonplace an actress as her sister in the play ; a shameful trick, ruining two acts so that in the third, when her moment came, she might bound about the stage like an enraged tigress till the house seemed about to come down. Of course, it came down in the figurative sense and everybody was delighted ; but I, who had seen her at the *Français* in the 'seventies, found excuses for her, saying to myself as I returned through the jostling Strand : This is the fruit of her travels in countries in which the French language is unknown.

Mr. Deacon. If I understand you rightly, Mr. Moore, your appreciations of Sara's acting were certain magical moments for which much was sacrificed ?

Moore. Much was sacrificed, but the moments did not delight me, nor could they have delighted Halévy, who had seen the original Frou-Frou, Aimée Desclée. She was in London just before or during the war of 'seventy, and I saw her in one of Dumas fils's morality plays, *Les Idées de*

Madame Aubray ; but I did not know French then and was too young to appreciate shades. I am sure, however, that she acted from the beginning of the play to the end. She died during the war, and in the early 'seventies all Paris was talking about her in studio and in drawing-room. In the studio in the Passage des Panoramas Julian used to delight my young ears with a description of Desclée as Diane de Lys searching among books in a library for a letter that some woman had written to her lover or that her lover had written to some woman ; and in the drawing-rooms in which I danced there used to come a great, heavy, unwieldy man, who spoke little and was considered to be very stupid, but before whom everybody gave way ; even the dancers, as he passed down the room, drew into groups to whisper to each other that the man who had just gone by was Desclée's lover. . . .

GRANVILLE-BARKER. Has the gentleman's name come down to us ?

MOORE. It is well known in France, and if you like I can——

GRANVILLE-BARKER. I would not put you to the trouble. It would interest me more to hear if the help you received from a piece of music was a literary invention, or if it really fell out that after having despaired of bringing Athene Seyler before us as she appeared in Congreve's play, you did really——

MOORE. Yes, Granville-Barker, I did really hear the D Major Sonata in Arnold Bennett's drawing-room and was reminded by it of Athene Seyler in *Love for Love*. But you haven't told me what you think of the interview I have just read to you.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. I think that if Athene is lucky and gets great parts to play, and her name is carried down to posterity, your description will help posterity to realise her charm. I don't know that we have got any adequate description of Rachel's acting, though pens have been busy with the three

great actresses. Gautier was a past-master of descriptive writing, and the abundant Théo would have found no difficulty in telling the actress's dress from the neck to the hem.

MOORE. The fame of the actress is transitory.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. Not so transitory as the fame of the authors she represents; their works remain to decry them. The actress is more fortunate; she leaves only a name and a legend.

MOORE. You are right, Granville-Barker. The mummer is more fortunate than the poet, musician, painter, or sculptor, and Athene is fortunate among her sisters, for I have always refrained from seeing her in those parts in which she earns her bread.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. And you live in your memory of a unique performance, given, you tell me, by the Phœnix Society; but in what theatre?

MOORE. In the *Lyric*, Hammersmith.

GRANVILLE-BARKER. Now I am beginning to understand why you doubted the wisdom of spending five hundred thousand pounds in building a National Theatre at Westminster. The exaltation with which the old masters are received in a theatre situated in a slum caused you to forget Wagner and the wooded hillside overlooking a plain.

MOORE. You are right, Granville-Barker. I have forgotten that the wooded hillside was chosen so that the ecstasy created in the theatre might be prolonged from act to act in the steep woods and afterwards till midnight and long after midnight in a restaurant. If we cannot have a wooded hillside overlooking an amphitheatrical landscape, let us have a river site where the ecstasy may be prolonged. Mean streets and a tangle of tramways from which we have to run for our lives like cats before pavement skaters, shatter our dreams. Whilst fleeing before them, many a time I regretted a restaurant, and many a time wondered how it was that groups of impassioned young men, inspired by a memory of the bust

in the museum, did not gather about our President's motor, crying :

Ave Faustina, plena gratiae immortalis, ago tibi gratias ! Now I know ; the mean streets stayed the words on their lips. Within the theatre we were as in Wagner's theatre, but the sights and sounds without the theatre killed the ecstasy and the value of the play as ' an educational influence.'

CHAP. XIX

121, Ebury Street, London, S.W. 1,
August 15th, 1923.

My dear Gosse,—Your letter asks for news of me, and I answer in reciprocating spirit that *The Sunday Times* will come to me to-morrow bereft of your prose, all that is left to us of the eighteenth century, which did not end in England till 1850, a year after your birth, for you were born in the 'forties, in 'forty-nine, I think and hope, else tumbles into nothingness my theory that your prose is the last echo of a time when style was a tradition rather than an ingenious manipulation of words—translations of popular speech into a personal jargon, a method of writing brought into fashion by Carlyle practised by Meredith, Stevenson, and . . or am I robbing wonderful Sir Thomas Browne of his due—was he the inventor of literary rococo ? My sentence has come to a full stop in spite of my intention to carry it over the page, and I fall to thinking that I should have written better and more easily, pleasing you much more than I have ever succeeded in doing, if I had been born in 'forty-nine instead of in 'fifty-two. One thing is sure : had it not been for these three unfortunate years I should have come to the point quicker, leaving out my theory of how you came into your style and how Carlyle was watered down by Meredith and Stevenson and—— But stay a moment ! The eighteenth century was not all of a piece

any more than the nineteenth or the twentieth ; it produced the arch-wanderer, Sterne—— Heavens ! shall I ever come to my news of myself, to the huge mistake made in the composition of *The Apostle*—— Eunice, who, perhaps, ought not to have been in the play, and on whose introduction into it I would have you meditate, since you are taking the waters, for a man taking the waters needs a subject of meditation, and what better one could he have than a lost opportunity, I ask you ?

Free your mind, dear Gosse, from all reminiscence of Joseph of Arimathea when you walk from your bath, and begin my play, this time in your imagination, in the cavern of the Essenes. The first act needs no change at all, and the second act remains unchanged except for some few lines that will tell how Paul fell on the pathway after crossing the bridge and was brought back by Jacob, the young shepherd. The Essenes assembled on the balcony will cry further news of the ascent. End of act. When the curtain rises on the third act a messenger from the balcony comes to Jesus and Hazael to tell them that Paul is unable to make the ascent, whereupon Hazael orders a litter to be prepared, and four litter-bearers are chosen to carry Paul up the terraces. Jesus would be averse from meeting Paul in argument, but he yields to Hazael's pleading that to save the Essenes from oath-breaking God has brought Paul back to them : It is in God's purpose that the brethren should hear thy story, and that Paul should hear it. The litter-bearers bring in Paul, and the brethren assemble to hear the story of the crucifixion and the awakening of their brother in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Jesus would begin his story by reminding the brethren that it was in answer to the preaching of the Baptist he left them to preach in Galilee ; he resisted Hazael, who tried to dissuade him, but so loud was the call within him that he could not do else but obey it. And after preaching for a year in Galilee, he went to Jerusalem and was taken prisoner in the garden of Gethsemane, where he had gone with his disciples to pray

that he might be given strength to submit himself to the will of God : God's will must be fulfilled though it be no less than my cross. Here Jesus would stop suddenly to remark that he had kept part of the story from them when he returned to Kerith because it was against the rule of the Order for a brother to relate his past life. This would bring in Hazael, who would tell that Jesus had wished, now that he had left the hills for ever and come to live with them, to confide the whole story to him the night before, but was interrupted. Hazael would order Jesus to continue his story, and Paul would sit forgotten by the Essenes, getting back his wits as the story proceeds. At the end of the story the two protagonists stand face to face, Paul convinced that the story of the crucifixion, the awakening in the tomb and the recovery of Jesus from his wounds in the house of Joseph of Arimathea, is the true story of the man whose resurrection he has been preaching for the last twenty years ; but Paul has to make a stand, and he begins by asking Jesus about the weeks he spent in Joseph of Arimathea's house and how and why he left it. His questions will bring in the story of the camel-driver, which Jesus would tell quite simply. He had hoped that God would send down angels to save him from the cross, but God had chosen to send Joseph of Arimathea instead, for God had wished him to spend a few more years of life. Why God had willed such a thing he did not know, for after the cross he had felt his mission to be at an end ; but the ways of God are unsearchable. Paul would ask him then if he were satisfied with the result of his preaching which had brought him to the cross, and Jesus would answer very simply that it had seemed to him he had accomplished all God had asked of him, and that he had felt no desire to preach any more ; and this being so, he could not do else but return to the brethren. Then Saddoc would announce that Jesus could not allow Paul to continue preaching a lie, but must go to Jerusalem to denounce him, whereupon Paul would say that the conversion of the world would be indefinitely delayed if Jesus went to Jerusalem,

and that the Essenes would be answerable for the continuation of Paganism. Jesus's journey to Jerusalem would provoke a wrangle, and at the end of the wrangle somebody would ask Jesus if he were going to Jerusalem, and Jesus would answer that he had told Hazael he must go, but he had now come to understand that the thought of denouncing Paul in Jerusalem was but a passing thought that could not have come from God, for it could do no more than set one man against another ; stirs and quarrels would be for certain the result of his intervention. God had called him to preach in Galilee, and after Galilee his inspiration had passed from him, and for the last twenty years he had lived as a shepherd on the hills, never in doubt that his life on the hills, leading his sheep from pasture to pasture, was as pleasing to God as it was during the year of his Messiahship in Galilee. Elijah was taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot when he had accomplished what God had created him to accomplish, And I, too, Jesus would say, was an inspired prophet when I preached in Galilee. I thought that when the prophet that was in me died, I would be borne up to heaven. This would give Paul an idea which he would avail himself of : that God in his desire to save the world from sin had intervened several times. Moses and Elijah were God's messengers ; Pythagoras and Socrates, too, were prophets. The Jesus that I have always preached, the spiritual Jesus, died on the cross. The story I have preached is a true story, and the story that I go to preach in Rome is a true story, truer than I knew it to be, for now I have it from Jesus himself. Jesus offers to conduct Paul to Caesarea, but Paul says he will go alone. Again the Essenes watch from the balcony, and when Paul has passed out of their sight they return to Hazael, who has been forgotten during the discussion. Life has passed from him ; he is put upon the litter and carried out, and the play ends with a monologue spoken by Mathias about the soul, which is to be found in *The Brook Kerith*.

It seems to me strange that I did not see that I had come

upon an accumulation of evidence not unlike the Œdipus and that I should have followed the form of the Œdipus instead of straying off to Caesarea, and I have to suppose a temptation to explain my blindness, a temptation of which I was not aware—ah ! if I had been aware of it I could have resisted it. A thought must have glided into my mind, inspired by an unaesthetic demon, that I should recompense the reader for the aridities of the first and second acts by exhibiting Paul in Caesarea bidding good-bye to Timothy's mother, Eunice, Paul's mistress, perchance—remember the thorn in the flesh. In other words, I mistook a temptation for an inspiration. I was tempted to bring in Probus with a basket of provisions, it seeming to me that I required a mirror in which I might show how Rome looked on the Jews. I availed myself of Probus despite Schopenhauer's wise words : The merely charming is never found in great art, and now I am in doubt if courage will ever be given to me to write the third act as it should be written ; and a poor consolation the thought is that were I to write the third act as I have sketched it in this letter, I should not lack critics who would tell me that Paul's farewell to Eunice and to his disciples at Caesarea is among my good things. I dare say it is ; indeed, I think it is ; but in art we are always sacrificing good things. A plague upon good things ! for they profit us nothing in the end.

Having asked you to meditate on my lost opportunity of writing a play on the Greek model, I fall to thinking that there are two roads, one leading to a bank and the other to a shrine, and that the choice of roads is given to us all in the beginning. Brown chooses to follow the road leading to the bank, and being a wise man he considers every project that the publisher or manager comes to him with from the point of view of the bank. He talks about food and drink and golf, and thinks about the play that's going on at the Criterion and the play that's going out on tour, or how much an edition will cost with paper at fourpence a pound. Robinson, who has chosen the road leading to the shrine, believes that

perfection of form is virtue, and he continues to shape his plays or poems, turning a deaf ear to the managers and publishers ; and at the end of ten years he commands an audience for his plays, or there is a public to buy his books. And when he and Brown meet at the Club they understand, vaguely, perhaps, but they understand that they have lived their lives wisely, always obeying the rules of the roads they followed. The rule is the same for both roads ; Brown must never say : I have done a good deal with So-and-so, and may perhaps now write some little thing for myself, and Robinson must never say : I have written three good plays, or three good books, and now I might write a seller with something in it that will retain the public I have gotten and get me another public. I am sure this is true, Gosse, and that the best things we do are those in which we have not sought any compromise. So interested am I in the importance of keeping the bank and the shrine distinct, that I could easily fill another page, but a taxi-cab has just come to the door bringing me a visitor, and I must ask you to recall me to Mrs. Gosse's remembrance, and remain, in haste, yours always——

MAID. Mr. Aubry has called, sir. Will you see him ?

MOORE. Yes, I'll see him.

MAID. Mr. Aubry.

MOORE. Back again, Aubry, for a rest of some weeks ; and then off again to teach from Paris to the Pyrenees literature, painting, and music.

AUBRY. In this last lecturing tour I have wandered from Paris to the Pyrenees, and when I go out again——

MOORE. You will go eastward, to Nancy ?

AUBRY. I hope to lecture in Nancy some day, but the journey is a long one, and there are not as many towns in the east as in the west. But you said teaching, I think ? I don't go out to teach, but to awaken dormant sympathies *pour les quat'z arts*.

MOORE. A veritable Paul ! And in what corner of France are your beloved Galatians ?

AUBRY. My Galatia is without latitude or longitude. Wherever there are ears eager to hear of beauty, I am among them.

MOORE. And you found so many ears eager for beauty that you have already begun to plan a new tour ?

AUBRY. I confess it.

MOORE. And from town to town you will go, an enthusiastic welcome awaiting you everywhere, taking pleasure in buildings, monuments, and gardens which you will never see again.

AUBRY. You never forget to talk like Gautier.

MOORE. I would not forget Gautier if I could.

AUBRY. You would forget Baudelaire, but you cannot

MOORE. For me it is always Ebury Street, and so I would hear of your faring. The first thing you do on arriving at a town is to prepare your lecture ?

AUBRY. My lectures are all in my head, and for my words I rely on the inspiration of the moment.

MOORE. Your courage frightens me !

AUBRY. I do not see why it should ; your friends are willing to accept the inspiration of the moment. And to speak to five hundred is not more difficult than to speak to five.

MOORE. You lie in a bed in which you never lay before, your eyes open on an unknown courtyard.

AUBRY. Are you not tired of Ebury Street ?

MOORE. Ah ! yes indeed, and have begun to recognise Ebury Street as my all.

AUBRY. I hear of you in Paris, I hear of you in Fontainebleau, and you once journeyed down the Loire so that you might write *Héloïse and Abélard*, stopping at Tours, Blois, and Orleans. And that's about all you know of France—five towns !

MOORE. Five towns reminds me of Arnold Bennett.

AUBRY. And of the French people all you know are a few Parisians.

MOORE. And of French literature I know but a corner, and of the French language not much more.

AUBRY. I wish I could persuade you——

MOORE. To travel with you in France, to follow you from town to town. Ah! that would be an adventure. As soon as I have finished——

AUBRY. It's always as soon as you have finished something.

MOORE. I shall be free in a few weeks, and we shall spend some pleasant mornings together—town after town. I am really tempted, and you will hardly guess what has tempted me. The thought of French travel stole upon me when you said that you did not prepare your lectures in the morning. On leaving the hotel or the inn at which we lodge, our eyes will be attracted by a church spire, by the high-pitched roof of an eighteenth-century house; and in the fall of the year what sight more enticing than the glint of wide waters flowing under great trees? Yes; I can see all that. But shall we make acquaintances?

AUBRY. Passing acquaintances, yes. We shall make some acquaintances, that I can promise you, and in the homes of these you will meet with pieces of furniture that you would like to take away, some old china, and some pictures; but you will not be able to make any purchases, I warn you.

MOORE. Yes; I can see it all.

AUBRY. You have read Balzac, and though his Parisians have disappeared or been transformed, his Provincials live still almost unchanged. If you come with me when I go out lecturing again, we shall find ourselves in—I can't tell you in what town; accident will decide that; and at the dinner party to which we have been asked, you will suddenly become aware of the rich harmony of French life as it is lived in the provinces, as it existed long before Balzac, and as I hope it will always exist. My tour was a success everywhere I went, but apart from the pleasure of audiences that gave a willing and attentive ear whilst I talked about art, literature, and music, of yesterday and to-day, my best memories of my

travels are of the acquaintances I made : amiable and fine-minded folk, possessed of a real and sincere culture quite different from the ready-made culture of Paris or London. Call it conventions and prejudices, if you wish to sneer ; real, prudent, and considered culture, if you wish to praise. In the provinces you will hear better French than in Paris, and you will eat better than you have ever eaten before. The art of dining still continues in the provinces ; the provinces hold out against the enemy : the international *table d'hôte*, which bears the same relation to *la vraie cuisine* as the newspapers do to literature. You do not know Besançon, except by name ? Victor Hugo was born there, and you know the verse :

Alors dans Besançon, vieille ville espagnole. . . .

In truth, hardly Spanish at all, much more Roman than Spanish, a sixteenth-century town, almost an island, built within a loop of the beautiful river, the Doubs, dear to Courbet. If I say a town of beautiful houses I hardly exaggerate ; unfortunately, many of these have been turned into public offices, a cardinal's palace into the post office, the town residence of a great eighteenth-century noble into a bank—all the beautiful woodwork in perfect condition, pier-glasses still intact, the house which Balzac described in his novel, *Albert Savarus*. You know that he never was in Besançon, but hearing Charles de Bernard describe the house, he knew at once that Albert Savarus had lived in it. One night at a dinner given for me by the Committee which had engaged me to lecture, I told my neighbour, a very agreeable man, an erudite archaeologist, that no matter where I went in the town I never could escape from Balzac, yet I had always heard that Balzac had never seen Besançon. Whereupon he offered to show me over the house in which Albert Savarus had lived ; and whilst admiring the old house I told him of an English writer who had read all Balzac and written about him with

appreciation, and how sorry I was that he was not with us. The old house would have fired his imagination, I said; he would have discovered all Balzac's reasons for his belief that Albert Savarus could have only lived in this house. As we wandered from room to room I stopped often at the windows to admire the landscapes, dark-green and white, with here and there glimpses of the banks of the Doubs, recalling Courbet, and not unnaturally, for he painted along the Doubs again and again.

MOORE. Tell me more. You are talking charmingly, Aubry; do go on, I beg of you, for if you do I shall go to Besançon, and perhaps live there. Before I decide I should like to hear about some other town.

AUBRY. I spent some pleasant days in Lyons, but I think you would like Besançon better. The climate is foggy in the fall, like London. If you should ever go there, I hope you will make it a point to dine at a certain celebrated restaurant, la mère Filloux, and of all, do not forget to order a chicken. Even the descriptions you have printed of the wonderful chickens you ate in Auteuil are exceeded by the simple reality of those you will eat at la mère Filloux's restaurant. La mère Filloux's chickens are so wonderful that one is moved to lick the parquet that reflects them, as Laforgue said of the Rembrandts he saw in Dresden. There is but one fault to find with her restaurant: the bill of fare is always the same, and no one can eat every evening *des œufs aux quenelles, de la poularde, et des fonds d'artichaud au foie gras*. But do not miss, should you ever be in Lyons, la mère Filloux's restaurant.

MOORE. I shall not miss la mère Filloux Once a week I shall go there.

AUBRY. I wonder what you would think of Puy, a quiet town hidden away in the mountains of Auvergne, built about a mountain peak, with a chapel at the top dedicated to St. Michael. The town is difficult to reach, and I fancy that winter is a real hardship in Puy; mountain folks are silent and shy——

MOORE. Puy does not appeal to me. Tell me about another town. Whence comest thou, Aubry ?

AUBRY. There's a biblical ring in the words.

MOORE. You are acquiring an ear for our language. Yes : the words are biblical. Somebody says them to Abraham, and the phrase is beautiful : Whence comest thou ? An irreparable loss to our language is the second person singular, and it could be so easily restored if we had any thought for the language we write and speak. But you have heard me hold forth on this subject before.

AUBRY. Your Bible must be very beautiful, for no English writer has escaped biblical influence, except Shakespeare.

MOORE. I wouldn't say that. Spenser shows few traces, if any, and Shelley's idiom is pure eighteenth century. But to return to your travels. Whence comest thou, Aubry ?

AUBRY. I come from Nîmes, a town which you should see, for you would appreciate the Roman remains, the circuses, the arenas, and *La Maison Carrée* ; and whilst admiring it myself I often heard in my thoughts your outburst of admiration for those balanced proportions of doorway and window so instinctive in eighteenth-century architects. If you ever undertake this long-talked project of French travel, you must not overlook Nîmes.

MOORE. A return to the eighteenth century is inevitable, unless, indeed, there be truth in the theory that to have culture we must have long periods without culture.

AUBRY. Another thing. The garden at Nîmes will delight you, the garden of la Fontaine, a garden that recalls Watteau and Verlaine and that Gainsborough knew or divined, divined, probably, for the garden is part of the thought of the eighteenth century. At every turn I came upon embowering trees under which I dreamed a lady and gentleman advancing in a pavane to the admiration of an assembly seated under a colonnade.

MOORE. And what use is this beautiful garden put to in these days of jazz ?

AUBRY. The grocers and candlestick-makers of the town go there to listen to military music.

MOORE. And the next town ?

AUBRY. You will like Montpellier and, if I'm not mistaken, be taken with the charm of its easy, affluent life, almost without accent ; cafés occupy a large space of the pavement in la place de la Comédie, and after breakfast you will be pleased to observe the Three Graces delightfully enlaced above their fountain ; and when weary of them——

MOORE. Shall I find anybody to talk to—forgive me, besides you, dear friend ?

AUBRY. In the south everybody wishes to talk, and in these cafés you will meet opera singers who will persuade you that music only exists between Toulouse and Béziers, and that all the music worth listening to was composed by Verdi and Halévy. And when you are weary of these, you will meet wine merchants and English, Swedish, and Spanish students, come to Montpellier to study medicine. The leeches of Montpellier and the climate are celebrated——

MOORE. Did you say leeches ?

AUBRY. Yes, a leech is a doctor, isn't he ?

MOORE. Ah ! yes ; an old word. Go on, Aubry ; tell me about the south. You seem to know it so well. Talk to me about Toulouse.

AUBRY. I have never been to Toulouse ; but I have been to Tarbes, which is close by, and you might like to go there, not because of Tarbes itself but because it is the birth-place of Gautier and Jules Laforgue. It lies under the Pyrenees, and there are wolves and bears in the forests ; but you have long ceased to be a sportsman.

MOORE. I have long ceased to kill and maim wild animals, and have come to think that as we only hold the world on lease, we should hand it on to the next generation as we found it. But the town, Aubry ?

AUBRY. Even Théo would have been embarrassed had he been asked to write about his native town. His pen would

have paused when he had written: Tarbes has a public garden, and in the public garden is a pond, and in the pond a black swan that plunges eagerly after water-weeds when the children forget to bring it bread. All the same, Tarbes has got a place in my recollection that Théo's pen would not have given it. My ears still retain the sound of rain on the roofs and my eyes a dismal group of townsfolk collected round a billiard table watching a player pushing ivory balls up and down the green cloth with a cue.

MOORE. I think I shall leave Tarbes unvisited.

AUBRY. If you leave Tarbes out of your itinerary, you will have to leave out Moulins, the birth-place of your friend, Théodore de Banville.

MOORE. I suppose you are right. I must visit the birth-places of all my favourite authors, of all my dear poets; all or none.

AUBRY. If they live in the next world and have not lost memory of this one, Gautier and Laforgue will be disappointed to see you turn aside from Tarbes, and how spiteful over their nectar and ambrosia they will be when Banville sits down beside them, Laforgue especially. You must go to Moulins. I am sure Banville has been looking forward to seeing you walk by the river Allier reading his poems. He would like you to read without lifting your eyes from his rhymes, but I must insist on your raising them now and then, for I would have you see the beautiful, rich country that lies round Moulins, chateaux everywhere, avenues, iron gates hanging on carved pillars, and walled parks that will awaken an almost irresistible desire in you to go to the doors and ring and say: I am a student of Balzac and you are all so like Balzac that I feel I must know you. *Les hobereaux* of Moulins may not know anything about Balzac, but they have all heard of Banville, so take care that you mention his name, else we shall not be invited to dinner.

MOORE. I am afraid we are speaking at cross purposes, for whilst giving me valuable information you miss no opportunity

of treating my project to end my life in a French town as an exquisite joke.

AUBRY. I certainly mistook your interest in French towns for a literary one. You are not really thinking——

MOORE. I am really thinking of a quiet corner and a grave.

AUBRY. Whither pilgrims——

MOORE. I see, Aubry, that you still think I am putting a joke on you. . . . For *on ne blague pas la mort.* Levity ceases when the sinister skeleton appears above the horizon.

AUBRY. Somehow one doesn't think of you dying.

MOORE. One never really thinks of anybody dying, death being as incredible as life.

AUBRY. But literature is credible, and I have never thought of your death-bed, though I have often thought of you lying in state on a pyre built out of five hundred (or was it a thousand ?) larches on one of the islands of Lough Carra.

MOORE. But you have heard of the burning of Moore Hall. You should have ceased to think of the pyre from that moment.

AUBRY. For what reason did they burn your house ? Not wishing that Lough Carra should again be defiled by a pagan funeral ?

MOORE. That, or another reason equally frivolous. Of course, *les hobereaux* will be but passing acquaintances——

AUBRY. But why turn your back on Paris ?

MOORE. The Paris I know is a Parisian Paris long passed away, and for many years the Paris I see conflicts with the Paris I remember. No ; I could not live in Paris. But my Paris is still to be discovered in the provinces, and I wish, Aubry, you would tell me all you know about the different towns you have visited, and the possibility of making pleasant acquaintances.

AUBRY. You have still friends in Paris, and you could get letters of introduction.

MOORE. Yes ; I suppose I could. The first step we owe to accident, and an accident of some kind is sure to happen within six months

AUBRY. But you are not going to live six months in Moulins ?

MOORE. Well, in Moulins or elsewhere. Ebury Street is a long lean and lack-lustre street, and I have been thinking a good deal lately of some place where I might pass the last years of my life, for I would not die in Ebury Street ; Ebury Street is not a place to die in. I would die where I began—in France.

AUBRY. Ah ! Now I begin to understand the strangely attentive ear you have given to my wanderings. But your pictures, your furniture—will you sell them all and start furnishing a house in Moulins ?

MOORE. I have thought of all these things, and dread uprooting myself again.

AUBRY. You left France because your tenants wouldn't pay rents, and when they began to pay rents again you had taken a fancy to London. You left London because you didn't like the Boer War, and you returned from Ireland because the Irish wouldn't learn Irish. And now—well, the Allier is a fine river and in every fine river there are fish. Are you a fisher ?

MOORE. I fish but little.

AUBRY. Are you a gardener ?

MOORE. No ; I tried gardening in Ireland, for I had a friend who knew by instinct before she went into the garden what the flowers and vegetables needed, and what they seemed to need always was to be freed from snails ; I have killed a great many and to no purpose.

AUBRY. How, then, do you propose to spend your time ?

MOORE. This last uprooting I have considered very carefully, and had I not a project in view I should not have allowed my imagination to be captured by the thought of ending my days in France.

AUBRY. What can this project be ?

MOORE. I am thinking of learning French.

AUBRY. But, my dear friend, you have been speaking

French all your life! You are speaking French now! You used to write in French, prose and verse.

MOORE. Yes; but without any exact knowledge of the language.

AUBRY. If you study the language you will cease to be yourself in the language and become, if I dare say it, for a long time a grammatical caricature. After you have studied our grammar we shall no longer delight in your conversation. We are interested in what you say and shall be bored by your attempts to acquire knowledge that we learnt at school: the sequence of tenses, and of all, the past subjunctive, which should be left to professors. In *Avowals*, you tell a story of a professor who surprised his wife in an Englishman's arms. The lover, whilst dressing, said: Il fallait que je m'en aille, and the husband was overhead to murmur: Que je m'en allasse. And at the end of the year you will be that husband, although you haven't got a wife to catch you tripping, for I suppose it must have been the wife who overheard. Of course, a great deal is forgiven to him who jokes well, but the mistake which you put upon the English lover seems to me rather far-fetched.

MOORE. But in the excitement of trying to find his shirt-stud, Aubry. . . .

AUBRY. You don't look forward to writing a book in French, do you?

MOORE. No; not a book. My lecture on Shakespeare and Balzac does not contain more than ten thousand words, and in the last three thousand I grew very weary. It is possible to write a page, two pages, or a few verses, in a foreign language, but a book in a foreign language is apt to end in lead. A foreign language may be written correctly, but grammatical correctness satisfies nobody but schoolmasters who don't know that a book must go to a tune, and how is a foreigner to catch the tune of our language? The English tune is infinitely various and always recognisable to those who have ears to hear. We hear it in Morris and Meredith; the language

unites two such opposites ; and again the language unites Stevenson and Pater. The English tune is heard in both, but how differently ! No foreigner has ever caught it and no foreigner ever will, not even those born in London. Is it race or climate ? Our Jews are intelligent and animated often by a love of art, but they have never contributed to English literature.

AUBRY. Conrad is not a Jew, but——

MOORE. Mr. Conrad has paid us a pretty compliment by learning to write the English language correctly, and the journalists are so pleased that they have assigned to him a place in our literature, forgetful that a man gets a place in English literature by bringing into the language something that was not there before, or shall I say that was not obvious before. Something latent in the language must be raised to the surface, and how is a foreigner to do this ? You are thinking of Hamilton, Aubry, whom you regard as a French writer. A pinch of snuff ! And now I beg that you will not press me to speak more explicitly of Mr. Conrad's writings. I should feel that I was lacking in courtesy to a guest. Moreover, I am anxious to hear your opinions of Bordeaux and Toulouse.

AUBRY. I have never been to Toulouse, but I have always heard it spoken of as one of the finest towns in France, and its university as comparable to that of Paris. I know that great painters and sculptors have lived in Toulouse, and I think you will find a society more to your tastes in Toulouse than in Bordeaux. Moreover, Toulouse had, and perhaps still has, a language of its own. You are a language revivalist, and might find enjoyment in learning Provençal. True that Toulouse has no such theatre as Bordeaux—one of the finest in France ; and to it all plays of interest come. On the whole, I would prefer to recommend Bordeaux to you for residence. Another thing, you will find many Gallicised English in Bordeaux and Anglicised French, very agreeable people, and though you may think that you would like to live in a purely

French town, you will never be able to forget England. There are plenty of pretty women in Bordeaux.

MOORE. My dear friend, I would not hear of pretty women. No longer are they any concern of mine.

AUBRY. Is one ever done with pretty women in one form or another? Is one ever done with wine? I remember—you don't care for wine, and since you have lost your taste for women, acquire a taste for wine. Bordeaux is celebrated for its meals. And meal without wine is. . . .

MOORE. Like love without indecency. I think, Aubry, I should like to follow you in one of your lecturing tours from town to town.

AUBRY. And that reminds me. I have a message for you. In many towns I have been asked if I know an Englishman who would give a lecture in French. Your face tells me you are willing. I'll think it over, and will be able to tell you in ten days. I shall know all my dates then and everything will be fixed: trains, arrivals, departures. And now I must bid you good-bye. I really must tear myself away; it's later than I thought it was. I lectured in Orelay and stayed in the hotel that you described in your Memoirs. The embroidered shirt that you wore in your great adventure is shown to sight-seeing Americans, who, after having viewed the battle-field, depart silently in an awe that is almost religious.

MOORE. I remember the Cathedral, a dark and masculine monument, with voices chanting in the darkness—Vespers, I think it was.

AUBRY. Impressive memories and accurate, no doubt, but I did not visit the Cathedral. The afternoon that I had intended to devote to verifying your impressions wore away by a fire of pine cones in an old eighteenth-century mansion listening to stories of the illustrious dead who spent their lives, or part of their lives, in Orelay. My informant was a librarian, daughter of a poet of old Provence, and I was moved by the sad story she told me of Stuart Mill, a political economist, whose wife died in Orelay. He loved her, it would seem, with

love that was more than love, and for a long while, for weeks, mayhap months, he sat watching her tomb, which he could see from his window. Poe could have written the story, and two such stories should make Orelay as rememberable as Troy.

MOORE. When we have suffered a great, irreparable loss, the world seems small and insignificant, and our grief the only real thing in it.

CHAP. XX

One day in early childhood I was taken into the library at Moore Hall to be shown in a portrait of my grandfather painted in Spain when he was my age; we were compared feature by feature, grandfather and I, nose, eyes, and mouth eliciting unexpected points of resemblance. Were George in his grandfather's clothes, my father said, none would suspect that he had not sat for the portrait; and despite my protests William Malowney was told to return the little boy in green to his place above the library door. I watched him through gathering tears, for I had looked forward to wearing Spanish clothes and to bringing our visitors to see me in grandfather. But the Spanish clothes! where were they? and with my sorrow already half forgotten I seized Betty M'Donald by the hand, crying: Come, Betty, and help me to find the clothes. Master George, the clothes are not in the house. Yes, they are, Betty; in the store-room or in the lumber-room. My father and mother laughed at my impulsiveness, and I heard that my grandfather did not leave Spain till he was twenty. But he wouldn't have left his clothes behind him, I answered, whereat I was laughed at again; and determined to prove myself in the right, I beguiled Betty M'Donald into many vain searches through the litter that a century gathers, and I do not think it was until I had outgrown the Spanish uniform or Court dress that the desire to parade as my grandfather

passed from me, and my interest was transferred from the little boy in green to the sad old gentleman in white waistcoat over the chimneypiece—my grandfather at the age of sixty, the author of many books, written in his library, so Betty told me.

I was pleased to hear that I had a clever grandfather, and viewed more favourably than before the prim chocolate-coloured coat, one shoulder showing against the dead gold of the armchair, and the voluminous cravat swathing him chin-high. But more than the external aspects of the portrait, the kindly, peaceful face enticed me and led me into a love of the library in which he had lived, writing histories and reading it would seem books of travel in preference to any others. He had had a paralytic stroke early in life and could not undertake long journeys—Betty's explanation of how he came to like reading about Chile, Peru, and Paraguay. I liked better the words : Syria, Persia, and Egypt, for my father had travelled in these countries and brought home many drawings of pyramids and camels, and was easily wheedled in the drawing-room after dinner into telling stories of the bringing of a boat across the hills from Joppa to the Dead Sea. And certain that there was no Dead Sea in a country called Chile, I would turn to the round table to read of scimitars and daggers in the *Arabian Nights*, or to ask Betty to tell me about the robbers who sallied from our lake islands in olden time to raid the villages along the shores of Lough Carra, and from her I heard that it was Fion the Fair, the greatest robber of all, who had built the castle lying beyond the bay. She could tell me nothing about the castle lying to the left under the Brownstown shore, which was a pity, for cormorants used to roost there every evening ; but Fion would put forth, she said, on a raft and carry off cattle and sheep, everything he could lay hands on, including prisoners that he held to ransom. I asked her if there was much about Fion in my grandfather's books. I don't think there can be, Master George ; your grandfather was born in Spain and never heard about Fion the

Fair. Why did you not tell him? He never asked me What did my grandfather write about? I haven't read any of his books; they are far too learned for me. I shall read them when I grow up, I replied triumphantly, my enthusiasm for my grandfather's writings abating somewhat when she began to tell me that a certain Galway historian, O'Flaherty, or O'Flanagan, had got ahead of him. The words might mean that O'Flaherty knew something that my grandfather did not know, or that he wrote better, or that O'Flaherty, hearing my grandfather was writing a history, sat up at night and got his book published first.

I was sorry indeed that my grandfather had failed as an historian, for that much of Betty's story I believed, but not the part about O'Flaherty. Galway and Mayo were rival countries, Galway being always a little ahead of Mayo in hunting and in shooting, but until the name of O'Flaherty was spoken I did not know that Galway had a priority of literature. And my thoughts turning from Betty to my father, I began to ask myself if I dared speak to him about his father. I had been enjoined by my mother never to mention the name of Augustus, his brother's name, or to speak to him of my grandmother, who had died within my memory; but it seemed to me that I might ask him why grandfather had not written about pyramids, scimitars, and the Dead Sea (my father never wearied of telling his travels in Syria). What did he write about? My father answered: Your grandfather, George, wrote several historical works, notably one on the English Commonwealth; all are in the library: and the question I longed to put: Why didn't people buy his books? died on my lips, so aloof and distant was his manner. I cannot recall the words with which my father escaped from me and would not fill the gap with an invention. My next memory is of myself standing before the portrait sorry for my grandfather, realising for the first time that he lived among his wife and children conscious of his alienation. And not daring to question my father again, I turned to my mother, who,

though she had never seen her father-in-law, had heard of him from his wife, and she told me that my grandfather had left five hundred pounds to defray the expenses of publishing his history of the French Revolution. My mother did not know why the executors had not published the history, nor to what purpose the five hundred pounds had been applied, and I was never altogether free from the suspicion that my father had acted dishonourably, till my brother showed me the preface to the history of the French Revolution in which my grandfather tells that he shrank from the task of putting the finishing hand to his history. Having published, he says, several times, but never with success, I am tired of publication in my lifetime. Rather than exhibit himself in his own house as a failure, he preferred that fame should be posthumous. And turning to my brother, I asked him if it were not his duty to complete and revise his grandfather's work; he, in his turn, said that I was the person to edit the history, to which I made no answer but stood looking at the portrait, thinking that it was becoming like me—I mean that I was becoming the portrait of my grandfather in old age. He was sixty-seven when he died, and the thought crossed my mind there and then that if I lived to that age the likeness would have reached its height, and that if I lived on into my seventies the likeness would begin to wane, some of it remaining recognisable to the end: the high, round forehead, the large nose, the small, truthful eyes. For my eyes are truthful, I said to myself; they belie me if they are not; and I fell to thinking that though truthful they did not tell a soul as beautiful as my grandfather's. He brought, I said, a beautiful soul into the world and took it away with him, leaving little of it to his son, and none, I am afraid, to his grandson. But I regret nothing, for had Nature given me my grandfather's beautiful soul—a soul of almost Virgilian melancholy—I should have remained at Moore Hall, reliving my grandfather's life

Nature designs no two leaves alike. I needed my

grandfather and my grandfather needs me, for none other would have admired his portrait as I do, understanding all the pretty accents that the painter caught among the grey hair tossed about the forehead ; none other would have valued the sincere and simple drawing of the eyes, or been able to affirm that the portrait was painted by one of Lawrence's pupils, who, however, included much more of the individual life of his sitter than is to be found in any of the master's portraits. As the portrait was painted in the beginning of the nineteenth century, about 1830 or 1833, it lacks the art of the great periods ; and yet it may be doubted if even the great periods told a story more plainly than Wyatt, a little too plainly, perhaps, but how truthfully the reader will be able to judge for himself without seeing the painting, for my grandfather's artless confession is a literal translation of Wyatt's portrait.

I, this day, complete my sixty-fourth year. I have for some time been engaged in a history of the French Revolution. I early in life began collecting books on this subject, and they now fill up an entire side of my very pretty library in this beautiful place. They are most of them bad in style, and worse in spirit and sentiment. There are few of them which I could endure reading were it not for the task I have laid down for myself. This task has the effect of giving interest to the most wretched productions. Any book which offers me the choice of a new fact, or the solution of any difficulty attached to old facts, interests me, and I find amusement in examining it. Amusement and the banishment of what the French call *ennui* are my principal objects. Beautiful as this place is, and much as I love it, I confess I have not always been able to exclude *ennui* from its precincts. There are hours in which I have not been able to keep it away ; general vague reading, without any specific object, afforded me no protection against it, but since I have sat down to my task I have scarcely known what it is. I have a rough copy carried on nearly to the present time. To every written page I have left a blank one.

in which I put down any new facts or reflections or news. I wish to go on for some time longer in this manner. But my age, as mentioned at the head of this preface, admonishes me there is no time to be lost if I wish the public ever to have an insight into my history. My rough copy with alternate blank pages it is impossible for anyone to make anything of, and it is not till after my death I wish my history to appear, not in the form in which my rough copy exhibits it.

I have several times published, but never with any success, so that I am tired of publication in my lifetime. Besides, as I foresee my history will be pretty voluminous, I do not like the trouble of superintending the proofs. As I am a man of fortune, I leave by will five hundred pounds to defray the expenses of publication. As the publication is in this manner ordered and appointed by me in my testamentary deposition, no one who survives me will be answerable for anything it contains. I foresee many things I say will give offence, but my objects are truth and my country. As amusement was my great object in undertaking this task, it may be said I have already gained my end in never knowing *ennui* since I began it. But having written a history of the French Revolution, impregnated with all the feelings and sentiments of an Englishman, and written in a style, I hope, purely and thoroughly English, I am ambitious it should be read after me. I have had no celebrity in my life. But a prospect of this posthumous fame pleases me at this moment. I may say with Erasmus : *Illud certe praesagio, de meis lucubrationibus, qualescumque sunt, candidius judicaturam posteritatem*, though I cannot add with him : *Tametsi nec de meo seculo queri possum.* Having missed the applause, and even notice, of my age, I ought perhaps to be indifferent about the opinions of those that follow ; their applause, should I ever gain it, will not reach me when the grave has closed over me. This is true ; but we are so made that while we are living we think with pleasure that we shall not be forgotten after our deaths. The nature of this feeling is beautifully expressed by Fielding

in a passage which Gibbon has transcribed in the account of his own life. What adds to my wish that my history should be read after my death is, that I am convinced no account of the great event of the French Revolution in all its parts will be fair and impartial coming from a Frenchman, none certainly will do justice to my country. I am anxious to have the merits of the Duke of Wellington duly appreciated as having done more in war than any captain that ever existed. He entered on the contest with more disadvantages on his side, as will be explained in the history. He had greater difficulties to encounter, and arrived at more glorious results. Though not a Frenchman, I am perfectly acquainted with the French language, and there are few Frenchman better informed with respect to the history, literature, and what are called the statistics of France than I am, so that I conceive myself perfectly well qualified, as much as any Frenchman, for the task I have undertaken. In this improved copy which I am now transcribing, I break the history into chapters, with a view to the grouping of the facts of which it consists. It is this which I call grouping that distinguishes the task of the historian from that of the annotist, and there is no point of greater importance in a history than the manner in which this grouping is executed. The deficiencies of some celebrated historians in this particular may be noticed. . . .

In reading this fragment the reader, if he have an ear for English rhythms, will remember Goldsmith, for the influence of this very English writer is visible almost everywhere down to the close of the century and long afterwards in Ireland. His comment will be : An almost anonymous prose, a still reflection of the writer's mind, altogether free from that pleasure and pride in writing which began with Carlyle and was continued by Meredith and Stevenson. For a man to write as well as my grandfather and to miss the satisfaction of readers, demands a more searching explanation than Betty M'Donald's, and I think we find the explanation we need in the preface ; for does he not speak of himself as an amateur,

and literary history furnishes few examples of men of fortune attaining literary celebrity, none, I think, of a man of fortune living in exile among an alien people, and how alien England is to Ireland the Irish Protestant knows. Protestants and Catholics do not mix, and the Moores of Ashbrook and Moore Hall were always staunch Protestants ; an ancestor fought on the side of William at the Battle of the Boyne. Two centuries of Ireland do not make an Irishman, though two centuries may succeed occasionally in absorbing those of English stock ; but in the next generation ancestral memories break out, and whosoever does not yield to them loses himself, as I think my grandfather did in the house overlooking Lough Carra, and as I should have done had I remained there. He would have done well to have left his house for a country upon whose traditions he could draw whilst using Moore Hall as a dreaming house, his spirit going forth at the end of the day's work to wander in the deserted corridors, in and out of the empty rooms, the doors opening before him, meeting everywhere pleasant detentions, finding one in an almost forgotten water-colour, another in a faded curtain of remembered pattern, and still another in a chess-board. We had relatives in India who sent home ivories and porcelains and rare carpets, but his own books would in the end beguile him from these ; and a book out of its place catching his eye, he would ask himself who was the negligent reader who had forgotten to put it back on its appointed shelf, and write instructions to Betty M'Donald for the better keeping of his library, without, however, asking that a needed book should be sent to him. Moore Hall, he would feel, must not be despoiled of anything, for so did I feel always, and I cannot think that my grandfather thought less kindly of the house over against Lough Carra, nor that he was blinder than I was to the complete enjoyment of it. No fear could have ever disturbed him that a Land Act would rob him of his dreaming house, or that it would be burnt by Irish rebels. He never was roused from his bed by a fetch-light and flung, as I was, across the hearthrug, breaking my wrist in the fall.

A Collis fracture, Tonks said it was, and he went away in search of a surgeon, returning an hour later with one who set my wrist, and whilst setting it questioned me about the accident. But I could tell him no more than that I had broken my wrist in a dream ; on seeing a flame shoot up, I had plunged forward to quench a burning house. A burning house ! they said ; but what house ? I answered that I did not know, nor was it till the burnings of our houses began two years ago in Ireland that I connected my dream with the burning of Moore Hall ; but when the spark was put to the train of thought, a day seldom passed without my seeing in my imagination Moore Hall blazing amid its woods, casting a fierce light over the tranquil lake, lighting up the old ruins on the island. The lake, I said, is several hundred yards distant, and the water that will be pumped from it will not avail to quench the fire. My house will burn like a torch. Moreover, even if the villagers came to quench the flames, the Republican Army would not allow them to do so. Everything will be lost ; and I doubted not the fulfilment of my dream ; and my thoughts turning to an eighteenth-century Dresden tea and coffee service, my heart began to ache till I could no longer endure the thought of its possible perishing and moved from my armchair to the writing-table to ask that it might be sent to me. But no more than a few lines of the letter were written ; the thought that a trained packer would be needed to ensure safe transport stayed my hand. The news, I said, of the emptying of the house will be a signal for the burning of it ; and I returned to my chair thinking of my grandfather's portrait : Which my steward can take from its frame and wrap in a newspaper for Tom Ruttledge, who is coming over to London ; why should he not bring it with him ? And it was I know not how many days after the posting of the letter to Reilly that a telegram was handed to me : Moore Hall was burnt last night.

Conventionally we die only once in a lifetime, but in truth our lives are beset with deaths, small and great. I lost father

and mother and brother without consciousness of any deadly disaster having befallen me, an admission that will be interpreted as an absorbing egoism, a hardness of heart; but this judgment will be reversed by a memory of Virgil's line: *Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.* The words will rise to the surface of the mind like a strain of music; they have attained to the condition of music in the long years and to the condition of drama when the woman in the play tells that she is not thinking of her dead children but her five beautiful dolls. We left the theatre railing against what we wished to consider as nonsense, but could not even then, and since then only the bluntest have remained aliens from the thought that the sorrow occasioned by the loss of little things is often deeper than any we can feel for greater things. Her dolls were the half-witted woman's dreams, and to-day I stand in near relation to her, for my dreaming house is gone with only the portrait saved to hang on the first landing in Ebury Street in a little lobby, whence it looks out and catches my eyes as I come downstairs, a sort of fetch-light or corpse-candle, reminding me that my race is over, betrayed, scattered, and in exile. Every race has its day, it says, and every creed; every grief, every joy, dies sooner or later. Memory outlives the dead; it, too, dies, but we are powerless to crush or to bury it; and were I to remove the portrait to a garret and turn its face to the wall, my grandfather's eyes would still haunt me and oblige me to rehang it in the lobby, for I shall lack strength always to write to the director of a public gallery and ask him to relieve me of it.

Conversations in Ebury Street

George Moore

Heinemann

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